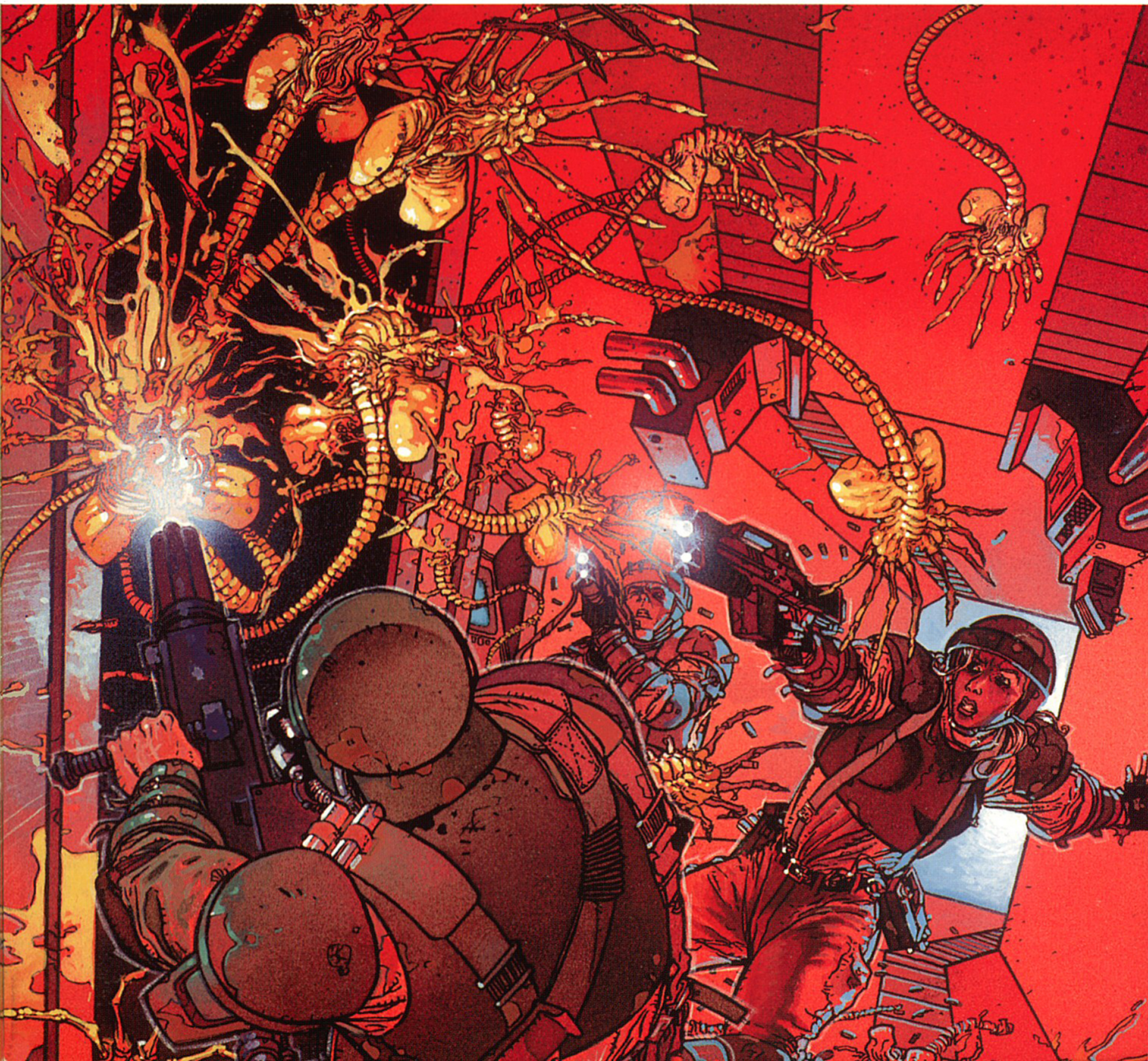
ALIENS™

OMNIBUS

VOLUME 4



ALIENS™
OMNIBUS
VOLUME 4

DARK HORSE BOOKS®

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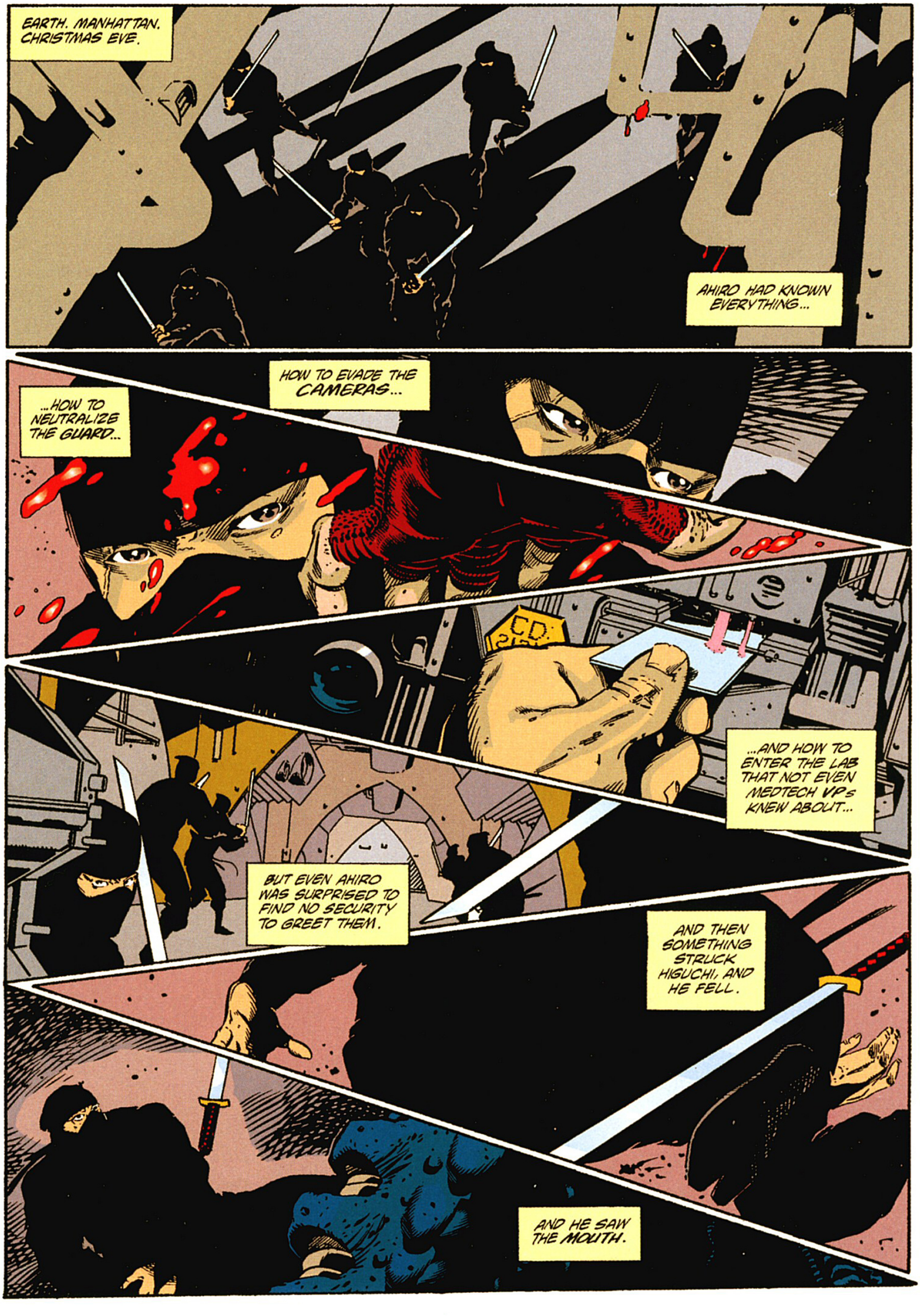
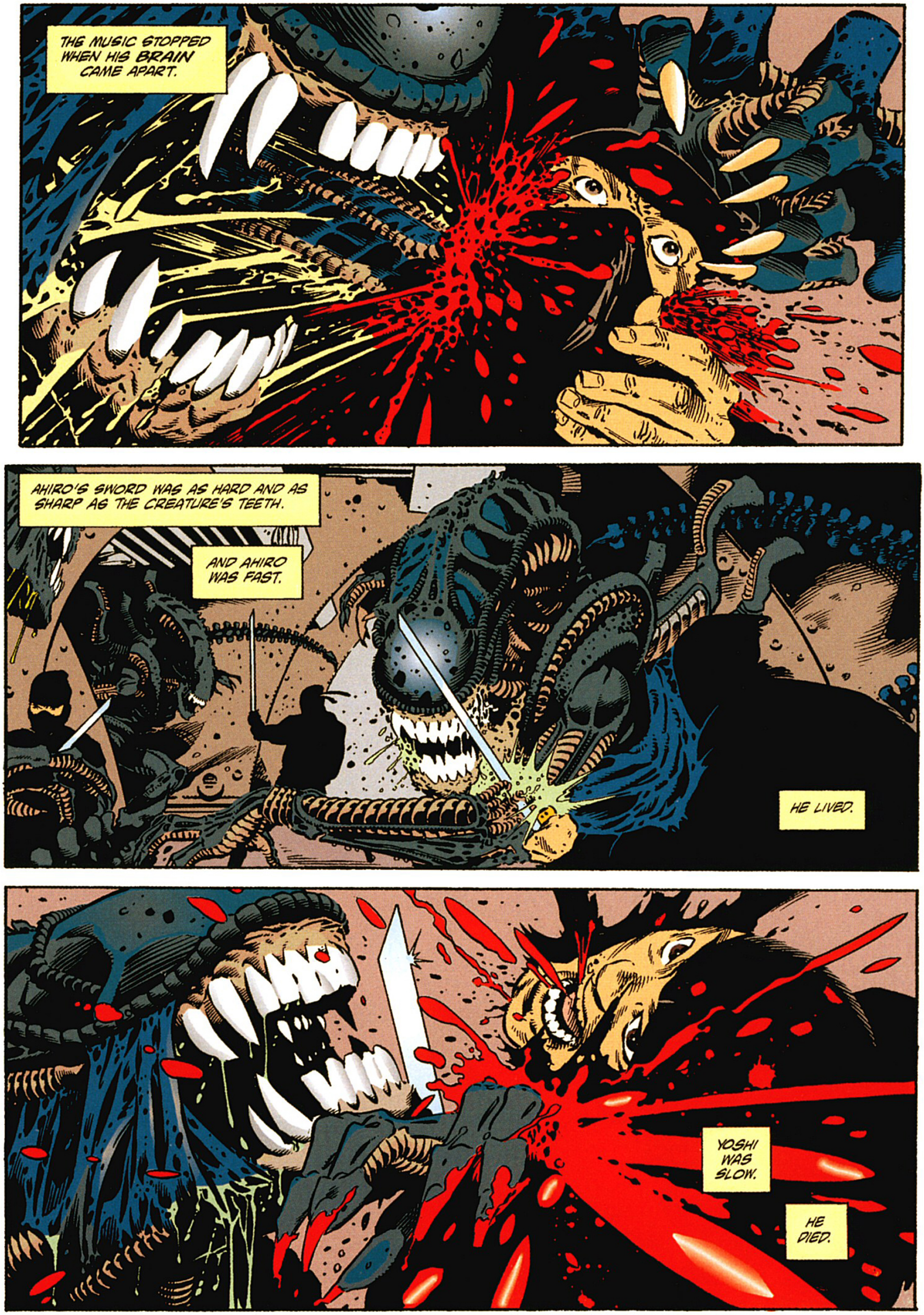
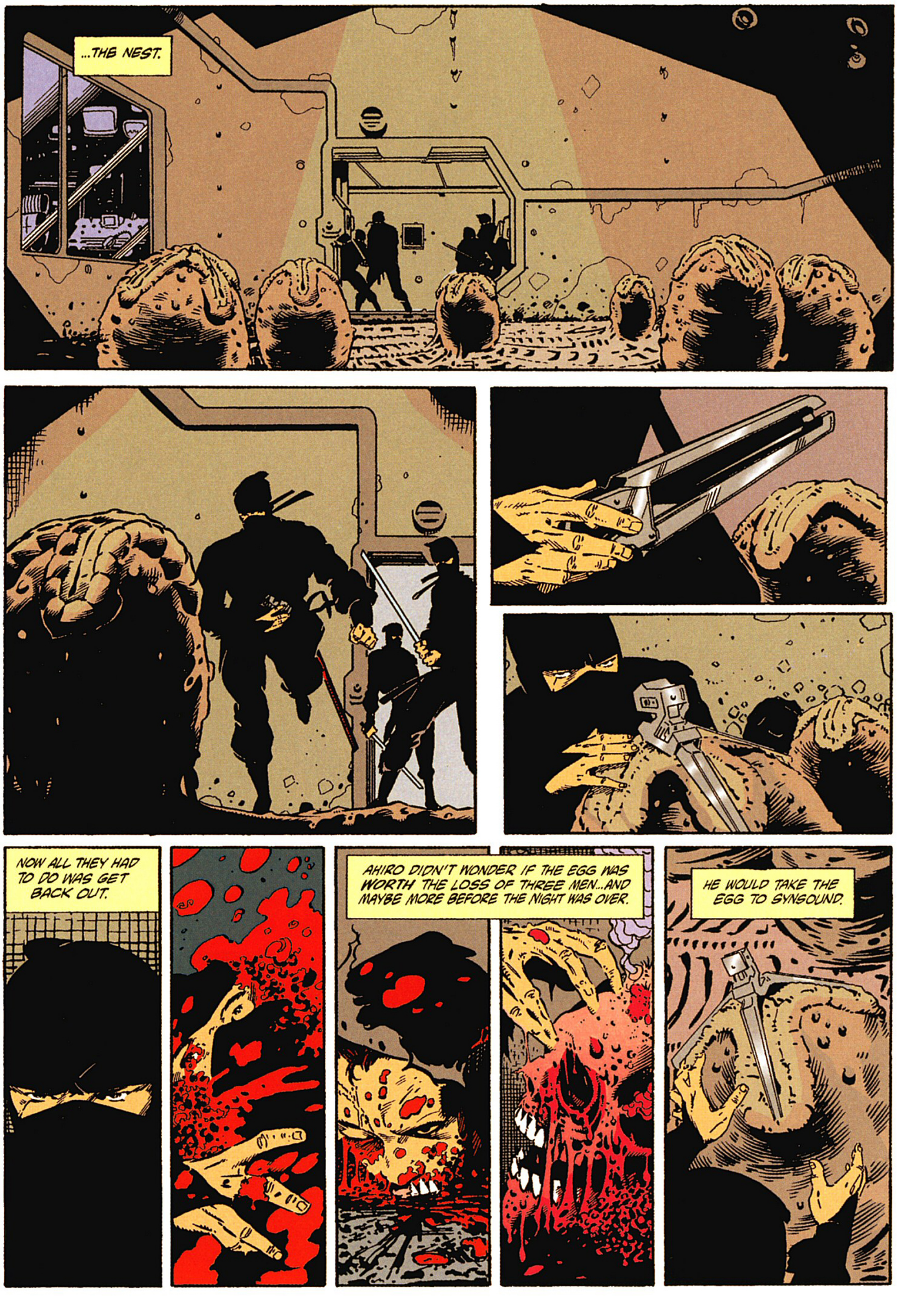

EARTH. MANHATTAN. CHRISTMAS EVE.
AHIRO HAD KNOWN EVERYTHING...
HOW TO EVADE THE CAMERAS...
...HOW TO NEUTRALIZE THE GUARD...
...AND HOW TO ENTER THE LAB THAT NOT EVEN MEDTECH VPs KNEW ABOUT...
BUT EVEN AHIRO WAS SURPRISED TO FIND NO SECURITY TO GREET THEM.
AND THEN SOMETHING STRUCK HIGUCHI, AND HE FELL.
AND HE SAW THE MOUTH.

AND HE HEARD THE SOUND.
IT WAS LIKE A DREADFUL MUSIC--
BUT AS HIS EARS FILLED WITH IT, HE KNEW HE WAS WRONG.
THEY WERE LARGER, AND CRUELER. IT WAS NOT A MOUTHFUL OF SWORDS FALLING ON HIM.
IT WAS A MOUTHFUL OF SPEARS.
MUSIC OF THE SPEARS

LIKE THE SONG OF DEMONS SCREAMING, OR ANGRY GODS RAGING--
LIKE THE MUSIC BLOODY SWORDS WOULD SING.
WILL-IAM-SON-HAM-IL-TON-BRAD-STREET 1992


THE MUSIC STOPPED WHEN HIS BRAIN CAME APART.
AHIRO'S SWORD WAS AS HARD AND AS SHARP AS THE CREATURE'S TEETH.
AND AHIRO WAS FAST.
HE LIVED.
YOSHI WAS SLOW.
HE DIED.

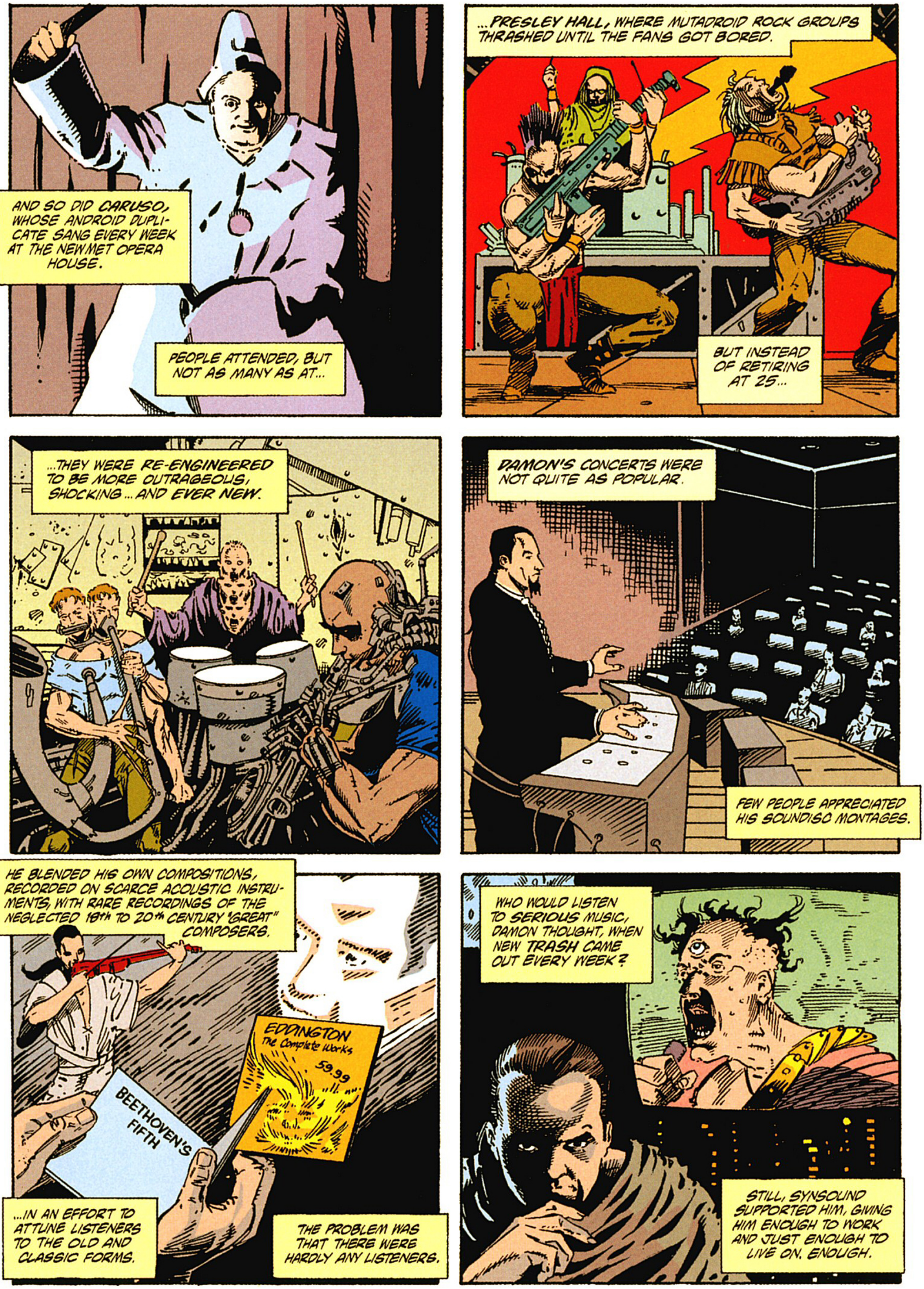
THE OTHERS DECIDED TO FOLLOW AHIRO'S EXAMPLE.
THE JOINTS WERE SAFE TO CUT.
THE BODY...
...WAS NOT.
THEIR PAIN MEANT NOTHING. WHAT MATTERED WAS...

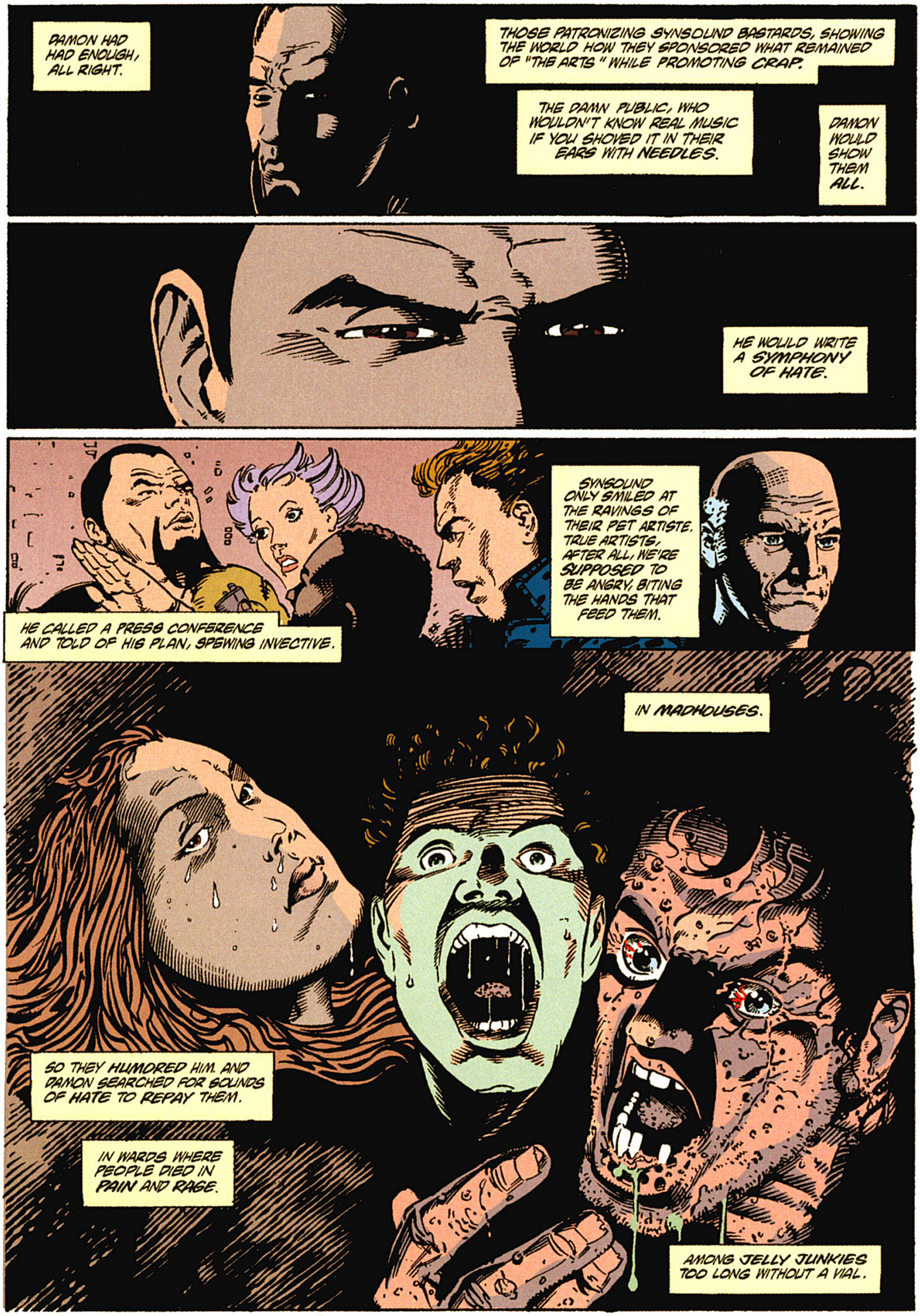

...THE NEST.
NOW ALL THEY HAD TO DO WAS GET BACK OUT.
AHIRO DIDN'T WONDER IF THE EGG WAS WORTH THE LOSS OF THREE MEN...AND MAYBE MORE BEFORE THE NIGHT WAS OVER.
HE WOULD TAKE THE EGG TO SYNSOUND.

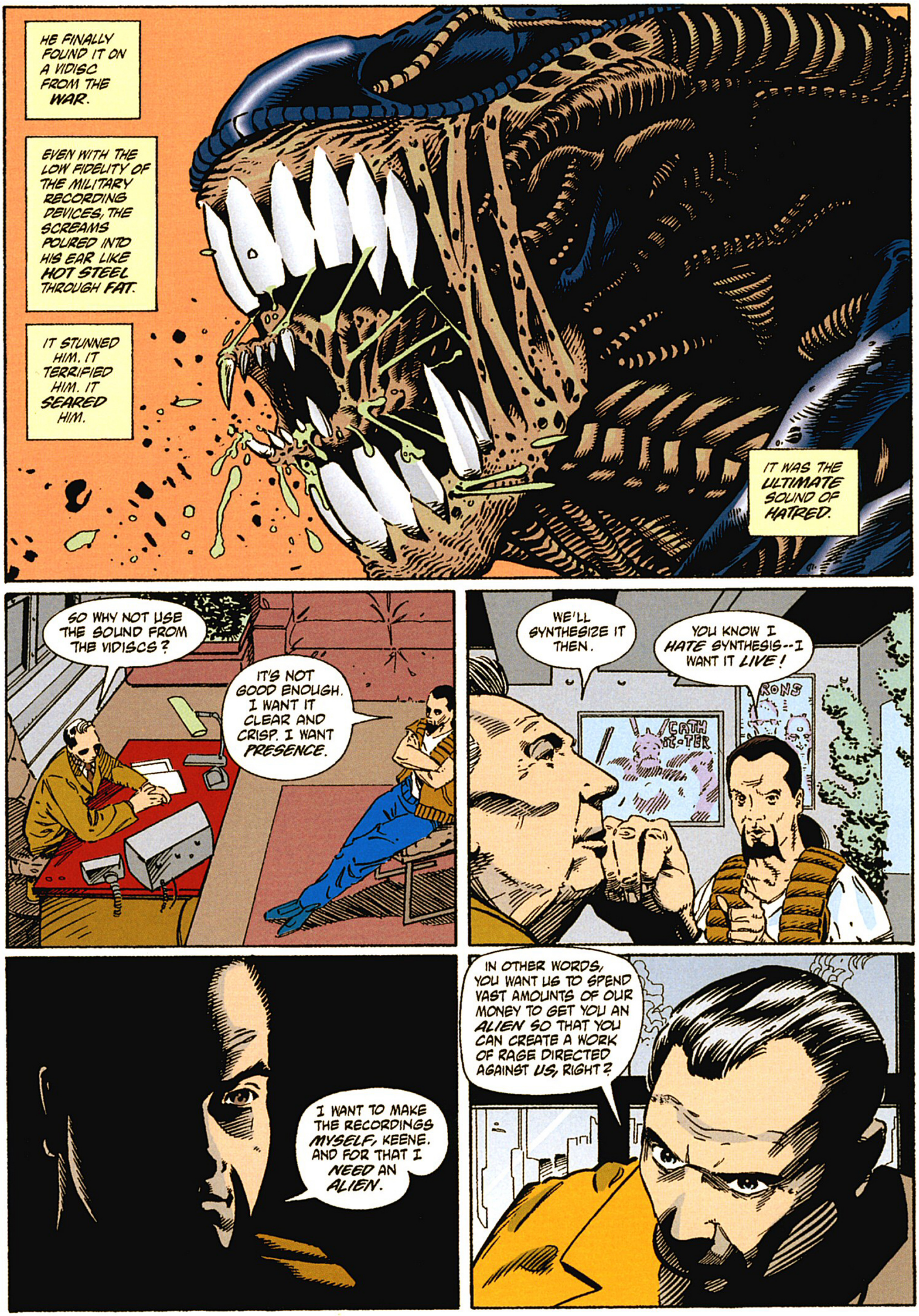
SYNSOUND
KEENE HAD TOLD HIM WHY IT WAS NEEDED, BUT IT DIDN'T MATTER TO AHIRO. HE DID WHATEVER KEENE WANTED. WHATEVER SYNSOUND NEEDED. WHATEVER THE REASON.
THREE WEEKS EARLIER...
HE SAID HE'D SEE ME, DAMMIT!
AND HE WILL, MR. EDDINGTON. PLEASE... JUST WAIT.
AS HE WAITED HE FIRST HUMMED...
...THEN SANG...
...A SERIES OF NOTES THAT REMINDED HER OF THE WAILS OF JELLY JUNKIES.
HE'LL SEE YOU NOW.
ALL RIGHT, DAMON. WHAT IS IT THIS TIME?
I WANT...AN ALIEN.
KEENE WAS UNPERTURBED. NOTHING SHOOK KEENE.
YOU WANT AN ALIEN, DAMON, YOU'RE NOT IN WEAPONS. YOU'RE NOT IN MEDICINE. SO WHAT DO YOU NEED AN ALIEN FOR?

FOR THE SOUND...
AS DAMON EDDINGTON HISSED THE FINAL WORD, THE SIBILANTS SEEMED TO THICKEN IN THE AIR.
EVEN KEENE, WHO PRIDED HIMSELF ON HAVING NO IMAGINATION, THOUGHT HE COULD HEAR SOMETHING ELSE IN THE ROOM.
SOMETHING THAT SANG FROM A THROAT OF STEEL...
THAT SCREAMED WITH A TONGUE OF FLAME.
TH TB 92

WHEN DAMON EDDINGTON FIRST HEARD THE SCREAM, HE KNEW IT WAS THE AURAL AVATAR OF HATRED.
AND DAMON EDDINGTON HATED...
HE HATED THE FEW CRITICS WHO REVIEWED HIS COMPOSITIONS.
NEW EDDINGTON AUDIOCOLLAGE DEBUTS
Tiresome and obscure piece bores small audience
BLOOD ROCK
HE HATED THE PUBLIC, MOST OF WHOM HAD NEVER HEARD HIS MUSIC.
BUT WHAT HE HATED MOST WAS THE COMPANY THAT WAS HIS PATRON.
HE HATED SYNSOUND.
THEY OWNED HIM, ALONG WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD'S MUSIC.
THEY COULD RECREATE ANY HUMAN VOICE EVER RECORDED...
BUDDY HOLLY SINGS GARTH BROOKS III
...AND MAKE IT SING NEW SONGS.
AND WITH ANDROID TECHNOLOGY, THEY COULD DO MUCH MORE.
ELVIS LIVED.


AND SO DID CARUSO, WHOSE ANDROID DUPLICATE SANG EVERY WEEK AT THE NEW MET OPERA HOUSE.
PEOPLE ATTENDED, BUT NOT AS MANY AS AT...
...PRESLEY HALL, WHERE MUTADROID ROCK GROUPS THRASHED UNTIL THE FANS GOT BORED.
BUT INSTEAD OF RETIRING AT 25...
...THEY WERE RE-ENGINEERED TO BE MORE OUTRAGEOUS, SHOCKING... AND EVER NEW.
DAMON'S CONCERTS WERE NOT QUITE AS POPULAR.
FEW PEOPLE APPRECIATED HIS SOUNDISC MONTAGES.
HE BLENDED HIS OWN COMPOSITIONS, RECORDED ON SCARCE ACOUSTIC INSTRUMENTS, WITH RARE RECORDINGS OF THE NEGLECTED 18th TO 20th CENTURY "GREAT" COMPOSERS.
EDDINGTON The Complete Works 59.99
BEETHOVEN'S FIFTH
...IN AN EFFORT TO ATTUNE LISTENERS TO THE OLD AND CLASSIC FORMS.
THE PROBLEM WAS THAT THERE WERE HARDLY ANY LISTENERS.
WHO WOULD LISTEN TO SERIOUS MUSIC, DAMON THOUGHT, WHEN NEW TRASH CAME OUT EVERY WEEK?
STILL, SYNSOUND SUPPORTED HIM, GIVING HIM ENOUGH TO WORK AND JUST ENOUGH TO LIVE ON. ENOUGH.

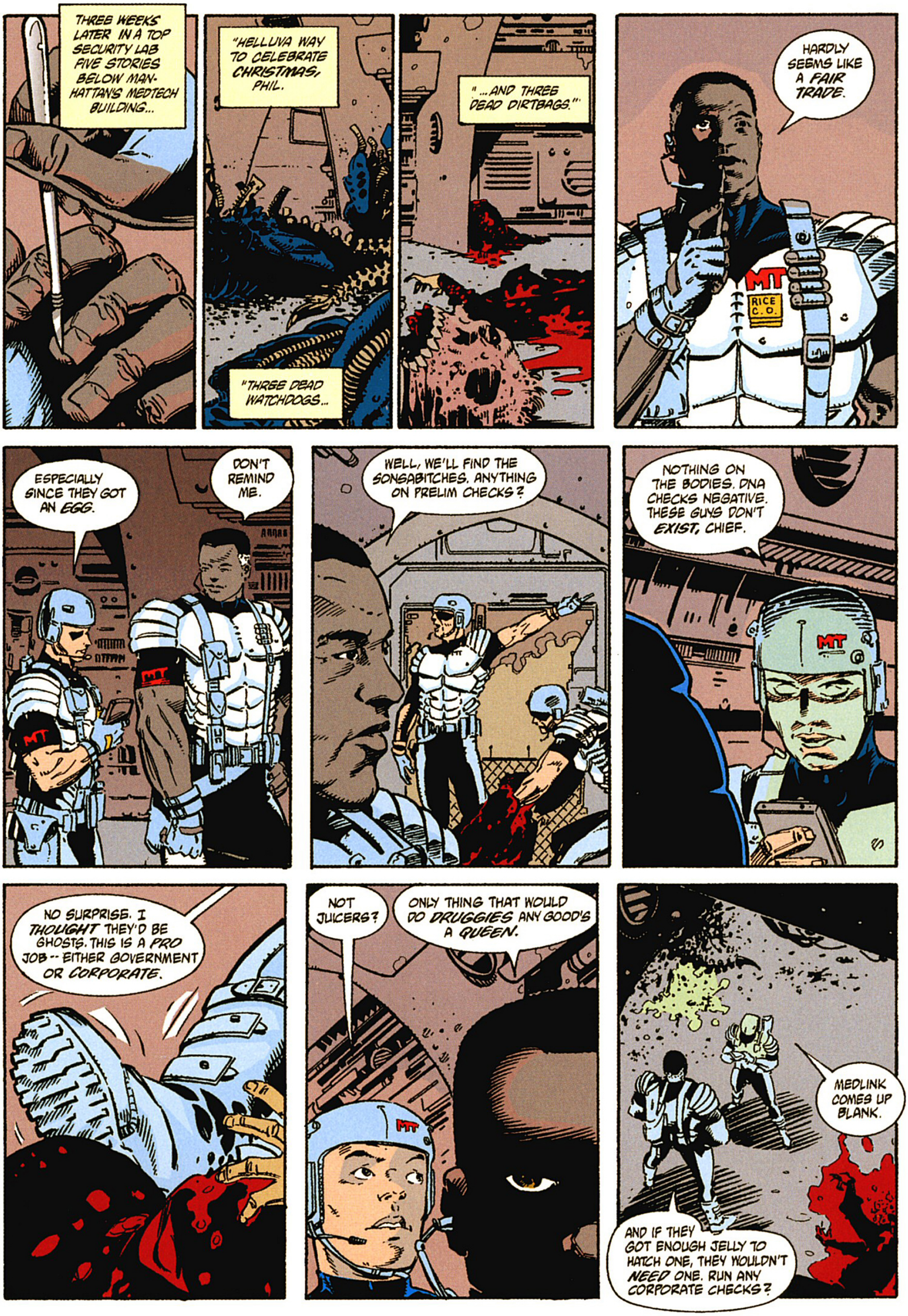

DAMON HAD HAD ENOUGH, ALL RIGHT.
THOSE PATRONIZING SYNSOUND BASTARDS, SHOWING THE WORLD HOW THEY SPONSORED WHAT REMAINED OF "THE ARTS" WHILE PROMOTING CRAP.
THE DAMN PUBLIC, WHO WOULDN'T KNOW REAL MUSIC IF YOU SHOVED IT IN THEIR EARS WITH NEEDLES.
DAMON WOULD SHOW THEM ALL.
HE WOULD WRITE A SYMPHONY OF HATE.
HE CALLED A PRESS CONFERENCE AND TOLD OF HIS PLAN, SPEWING INVECTIVE.
SYNSOUND ONLY SMILED AT THE RAVINGS OF THEIR PET ARTISTE. TRUE ARTISTS, AFTER ALL, WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE ANGRY, BITING THE HANDS THAT FEED THEM.
SO THEY HUMORED HIM. AND DAMON SEARCHED FOR SOUNDS OF HATE TO REPAY THEM.
IN MADHOUSES.
IN WARDS WHERE PEOPLE DIED IN PAIN AND RAGE.
AMONG JELLY JUNKIES TOO LONG WITHOUT A VIAL.



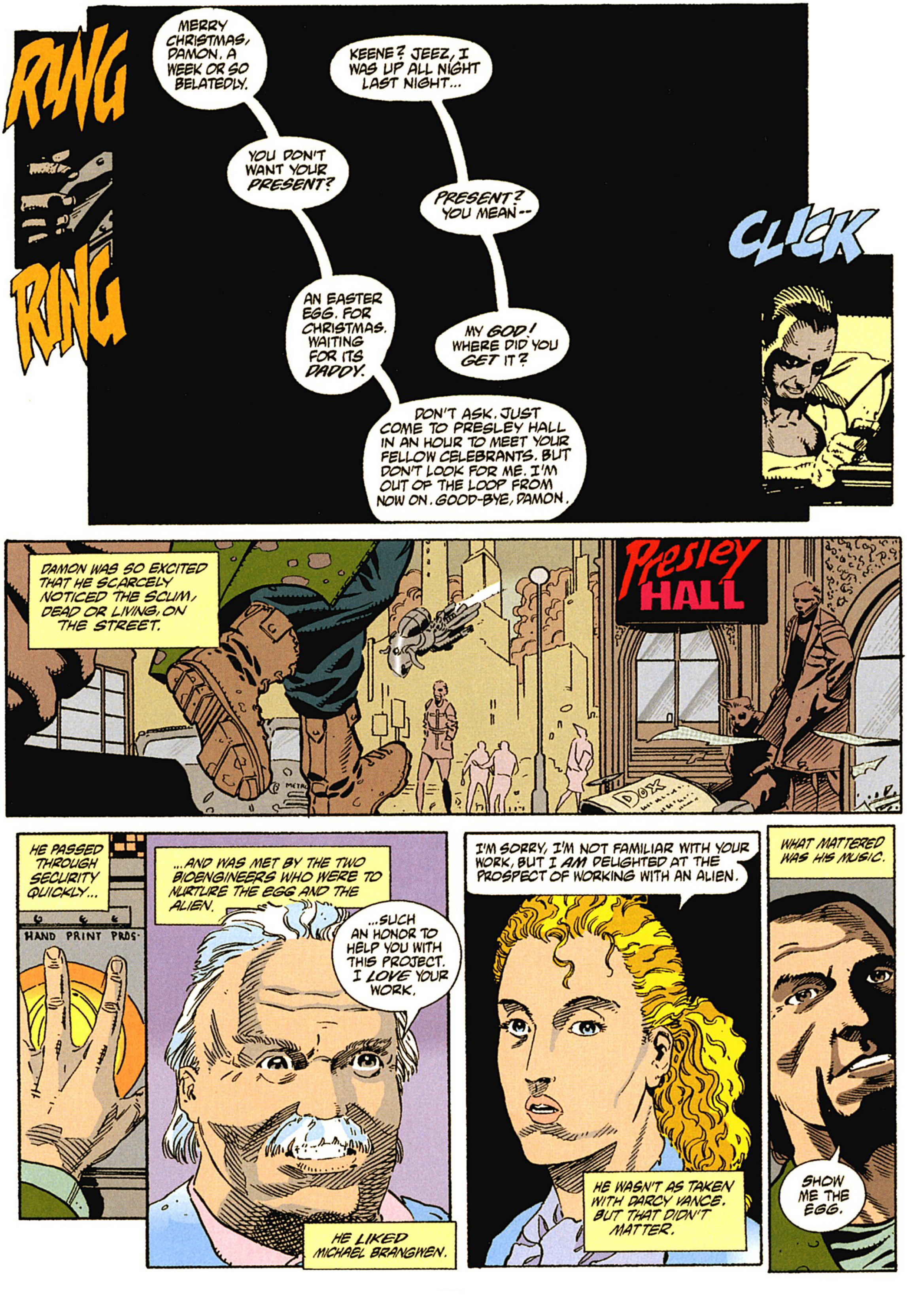
HE FINALLY FOUND IT ON A VIDISC FROM THE WAR.
EVEN WITH THE LOW FIDELITY OF THE MILITARY RECORDING DEVICES, THE SCREAMS POURED INTO HIS EAR LIKE HOT STEEL THROUGH FAT.
IT STUNNED HIM. IT TERRIFIED HIM. IT SEARED HIM.
IT WAS THE ULTIMATE SOUND OF HATRED.
SO WHY NOT USE THE SOUND FROM THE VIDISCS?
IT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH. I WANT IT CLEAR AND CRISP. I WANT PRESENCE.
WE'LL SYNTHESIZE IT THEN.
YOU KNOW I HATE SYNTHESIS--I WANT IT LIVE!
I WANT TO MAKE THE RECORDINGS MYSELF, KEENE. AND FOR THAT I NEED AN ALIEN.
IN OTHER WORDS, YOU WANT US TO SPEND VAST AMOUNTS OF OUR MONEY TO GET YOU AN ALIEN SO THAT YOU CAN CREATE A WORK OF RAGE DIRECTED AGAINST US, RIGHT?

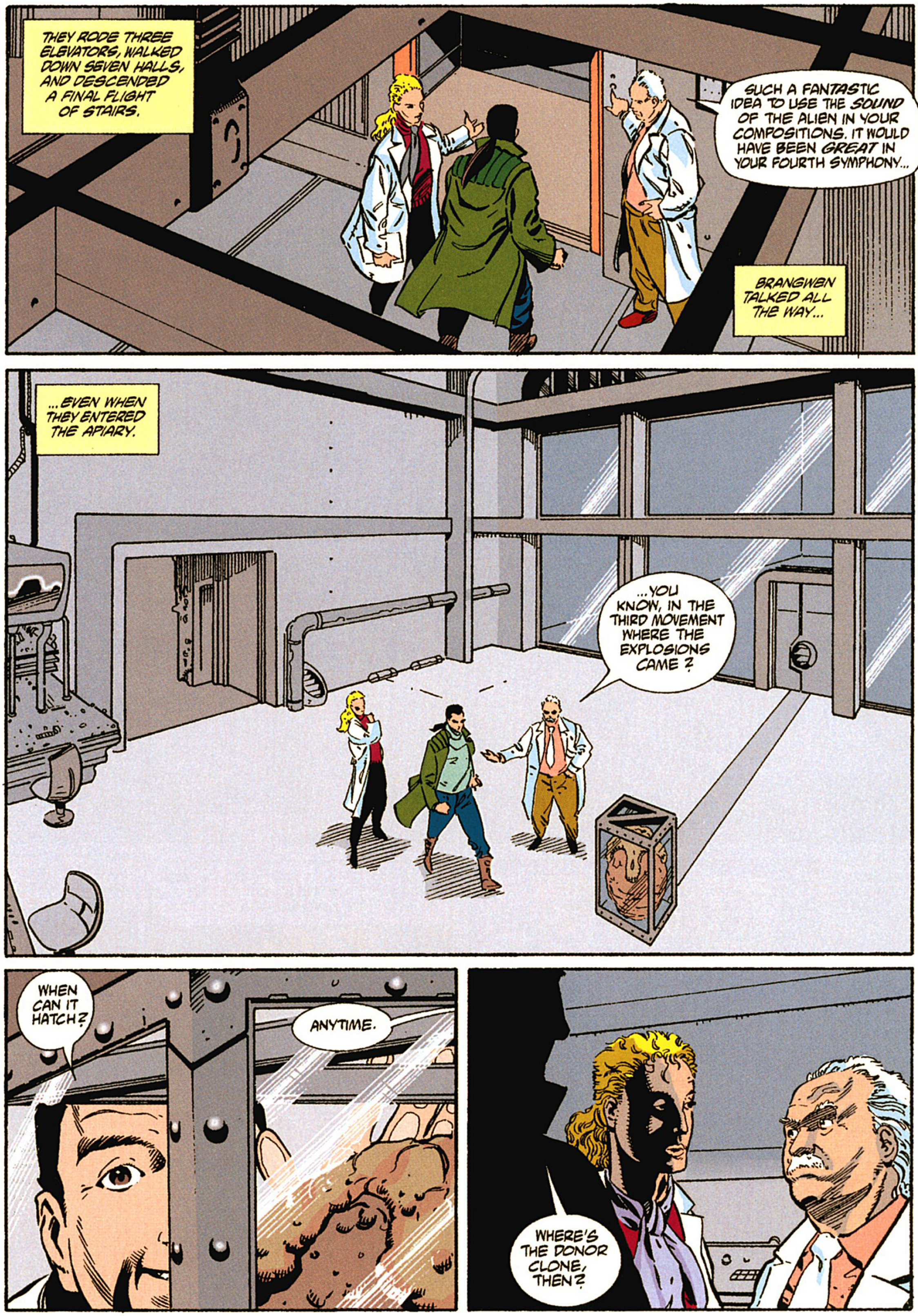
RIGHT. BUT YOU'LL DO IT ANYWAY... WON'T YOU?
VAST AMOUNTS? HARDLY. YOU'RE LOW-PRIORITY AND LOW-BUDGET, DAMON. SO WE'RE LIMITED AS TO HOW WE CAN GET OUR MUSICAL PET HIS LITTLE PET.
"WE CERTAINLY CAN'T FUND A MISSION TO HOMEWORLD."
"AND BRIBING THE MILITARY IS POSSIBLE, BUT TOO EXPENSIVE."
MEDTECH
"STILL, THERE MAY BE A WAY."
I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO.
I NEED IT, KEENE.
GOOD-BYE, DAMON.
GET ME YORIKU.

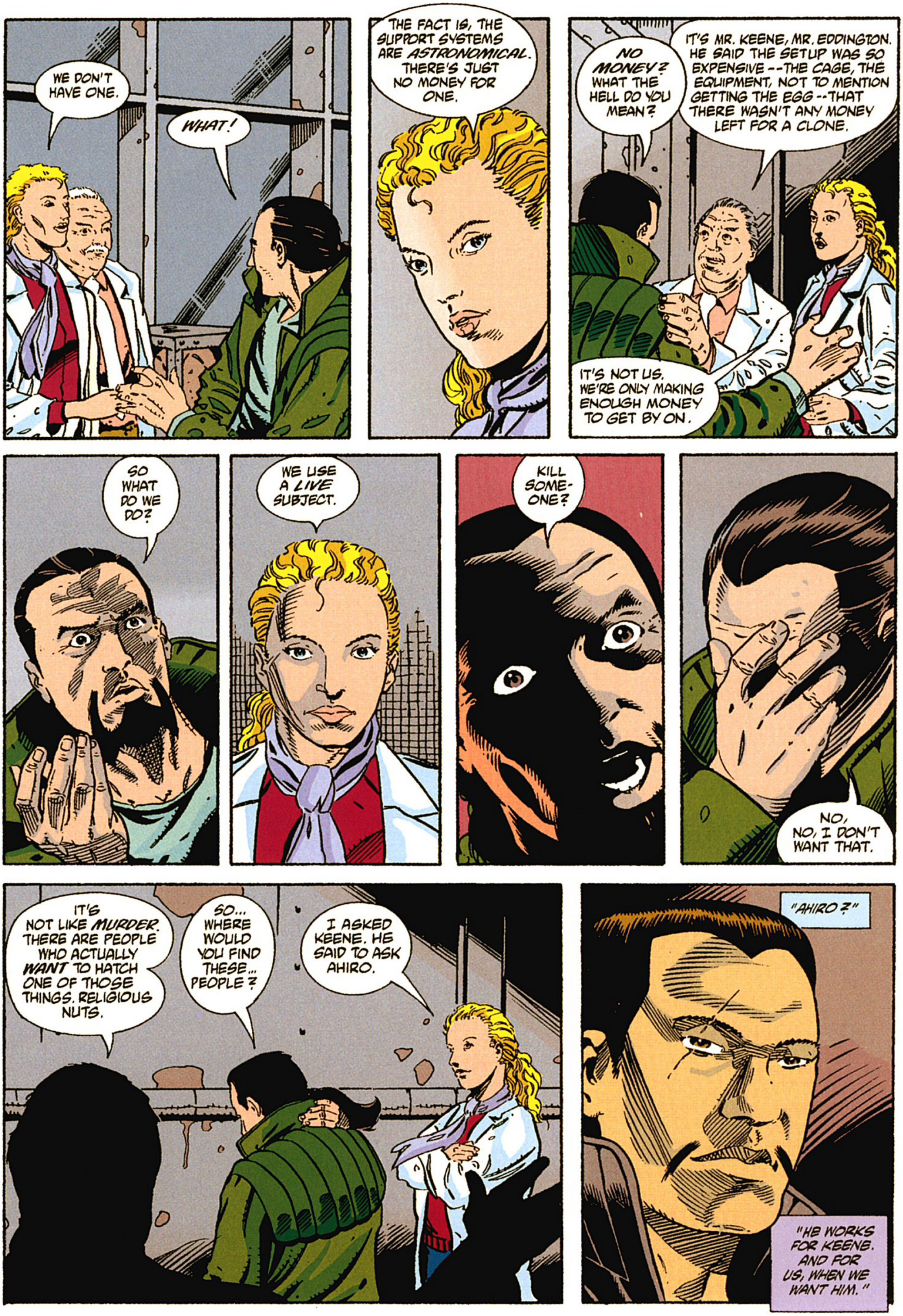
YORIKU'S IMAGE APPEARED IN TWELVE MINUTES.
IT'S DAMON EDDINGTON, SIR.
YES SIR, HE IS FUNNY. VERY FUNNY. ANYWAY, IT SEEMS...
HE TOLD SYNSOUND'S PRESIDENT EVERYTHING, INCLUDING HOW HE WANTED TO GET THE EGG.
SO... ARE WE IN A POSITION TO HUMILIATE MEDTECH, SIR?
WHEN KEENE SAW HIM SMILE, HE KNEW THE TRUTH OF A RUMOR ABOUT HIS BOSS, A FAMOUS MODEL, AND THE MEDTECH EXECUTIVE WHO HAD TAKEN YORIKU'S PLACE IN HER BED.
WE ARE. AND I WANT THEM TO KNOW IT WAS SYNSOUND.
THEY WILL, SIR. WHEN EDDINGTON'S WORK COMES OUT, THERE WILL BE NO MISTAKE.
WHEN YORIKU HAD GONE OFF-LINE...
SEND UP AHIRO.
I HAVE A JOB FOR YOU... AN EASY JOB.
AS EASY AS STEALING AN EGG FROM A NEST...


THREE WEEKS LATER IN A TOP SECURITY LAB FIVE STORIES BELOW MAN-HATTAN'S MEDTECH BUILDING...
"HELLUVA WAY TO CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS, PHIL.
"THREE DEAD WATCHDOGS...
"...AND THREE DEAD DIRTBAGS."
HARDLY SEEMS LIKE A FAIR TRADE.
MT
RICE C.O.
ESPECIALLY SINCE THEY GOT AN EGG.
DON'T REMIND ME.
MT
MT
WELL, WE'LL FIND THE SONSABITCHES. ANYTHING ON PRELIM CHECKS?
NOTHING ON THE BODIES. DNA CHECKS NEGATIVE. THESE GUYS DON'T EXIST, CHIEF.
MT
NO SURPRISE. I THOUGHT THEY'D BE GHOSTS. THIS IS A PRO JOB -- EITHER GOVERNMENT OR CORPORATE.
NOT JUICERS?
ONLY THING THAT WOULD DO DRUGGIES ANY GOOD'S A QUEEN.
MT
MEDLINK COMES UP BLANK.
AND IF THEY GOT ENOUGH JELLY TO HATCH ONE, THEY WOULDN'T NEED ONE. RUN ANY CORPORATE CHECKS?

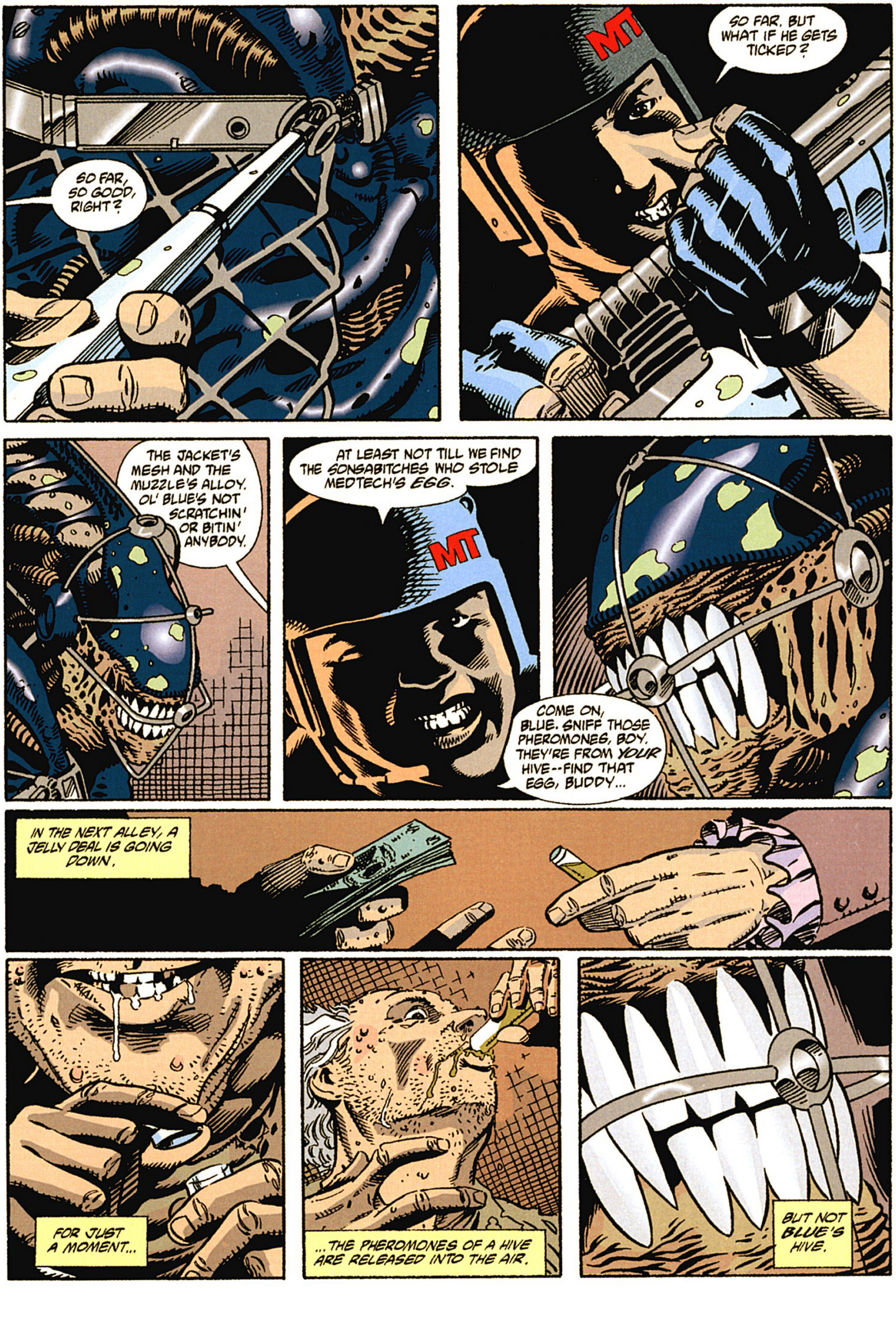
WELL, GO DEEPER. THESE BASTARDS HAVE MADE US LOOK BAD. I WANT THEM. AND IF MEDLINK CAN'T FIND THEM, WE'LL PUT THE BLOODHOUND ON THEIR TRAIL.
THE ALIEN?
YOUR ALIEN, MY BLOODHOUND...
"...OL' BLUE."

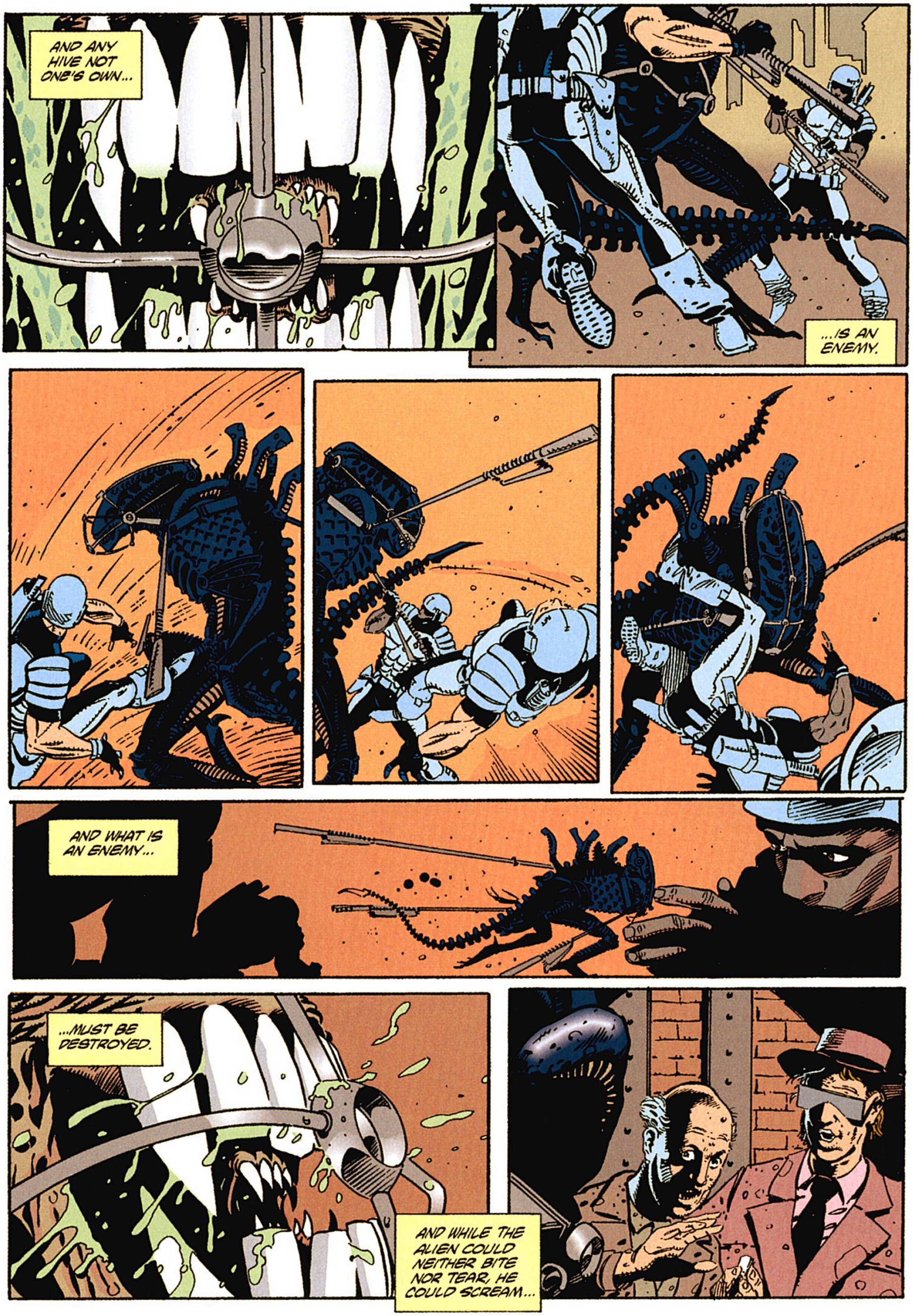

RING
RING
MERRY CHRISTMAS, DAMON. A WEEK OR SO BELATEDLY.
KEENE? JEEZ, I WAS UP ALL NIGHT LAST NIGHT...
YOU DON'T WANT YOUR PRESENT?
PRESENT? YOU MEAN--
AN EASTER EGG. FOR CHRISTMAS. WAITING FOR ITS DADDY.
MY GOD! WHERE DID YOU GET IT?
DON'T ASK. JUST COME TO PRESLEY HALL IN AN HOUR TO MEET YOUR FELLOW CELEBRANTS. BUT DON'T LOOK FOR ME. I'M OUT OF THE LOOP FROM NOW ON. GOOD-BYE, DAMON.
CLICK
DAMON WAS SO EXCITED THAT HE SCARCELY NOTICED THE SCUM, DEAD OR LIVING, ON THE STREET.
Presley HALL
DOX
HE PASSED THROUGH SECURITY QUICKLY...
HAND PRINT PROS
...AND WAS MET BY THE TWO BIOENGINEERS WHO WERE TO NURTURE THE EGG AND THE ALIEN.
...SUCH AN HONOR TO HELP YOU WITH THIS PROJECT. I LOVE YOUR WORK.
HE LIKED MICHAEL BRANGWEN.
I'M SORRY, I'M NOT FAMILIAR WITH YOUR WORK, BUT I AM DELIGHTED AT THE PROSPECT OF WORKING WITH AN ALIEN.
HE WASN'T AS TAKEN WITH DARCY VANCE. BUT THAT DIDN'T MATTER.
WHAT MATTERED WAS HIS MUSIC.
SHOW ME THE EGG.

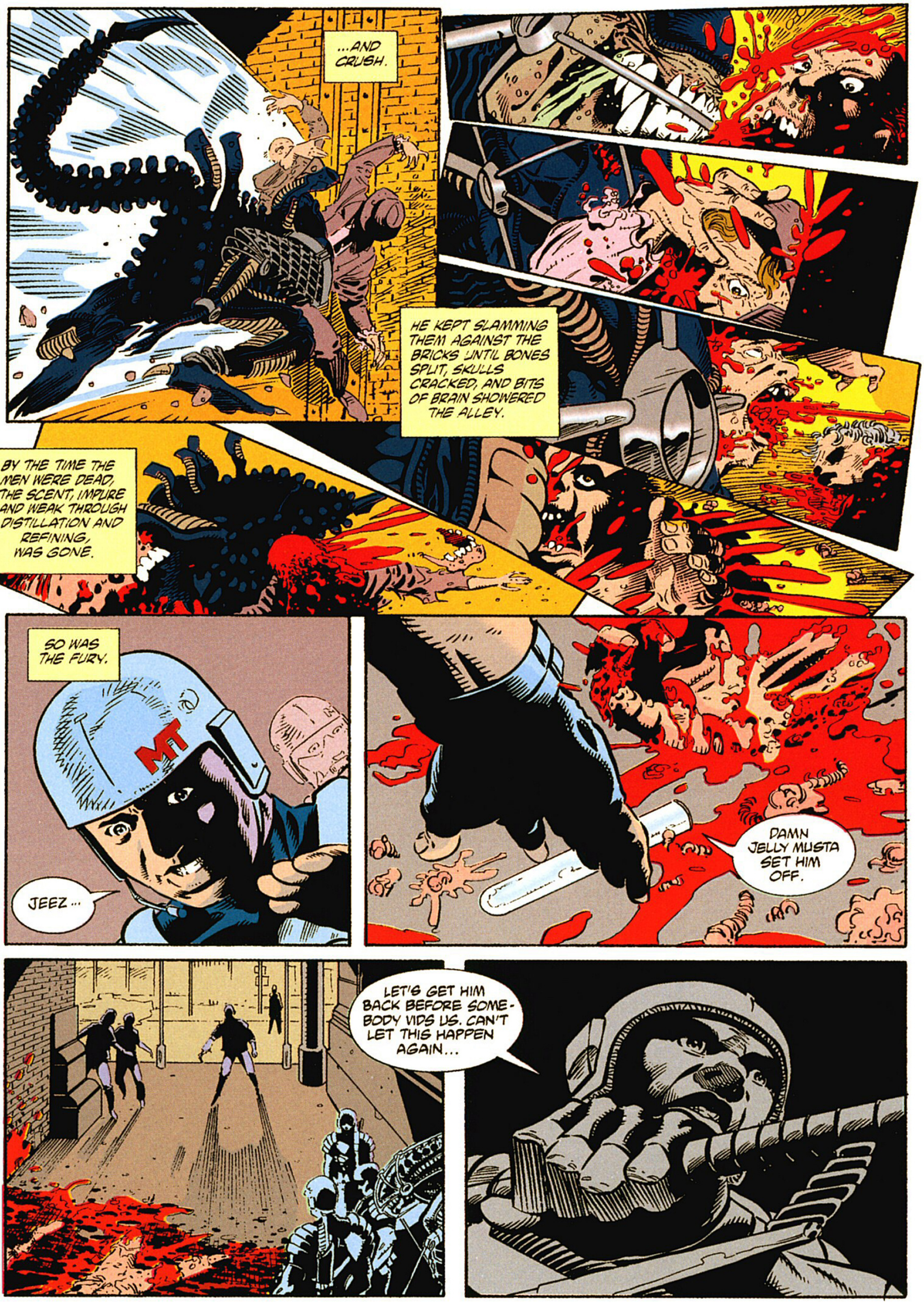

THEY RODE THREE ELEVATORS, WALKED DOWN SEVEN HALLS, AND DESCENDED A FINAL FLIGHT OF STAIRS.
SUCH A FANTASTIC IDEA TO USE THE SOUND OF THE ALIEN IN YOUR COMPOSITIONS. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN GREAT IN YOUR FOURTH SYMPHONY...
BRANGWEN TALKED ALL THE WAY...
...EVEN WHEN THEY ENTERED THE APIARY.
...YOU KNOW, IN THE THIRD MOVEMENT WHERE THE EXPLOSIONS CAME?
WHEN CAN IT HATCH?
ANYTIME.
WHERE'S THE DONOR CLONE, THEN?

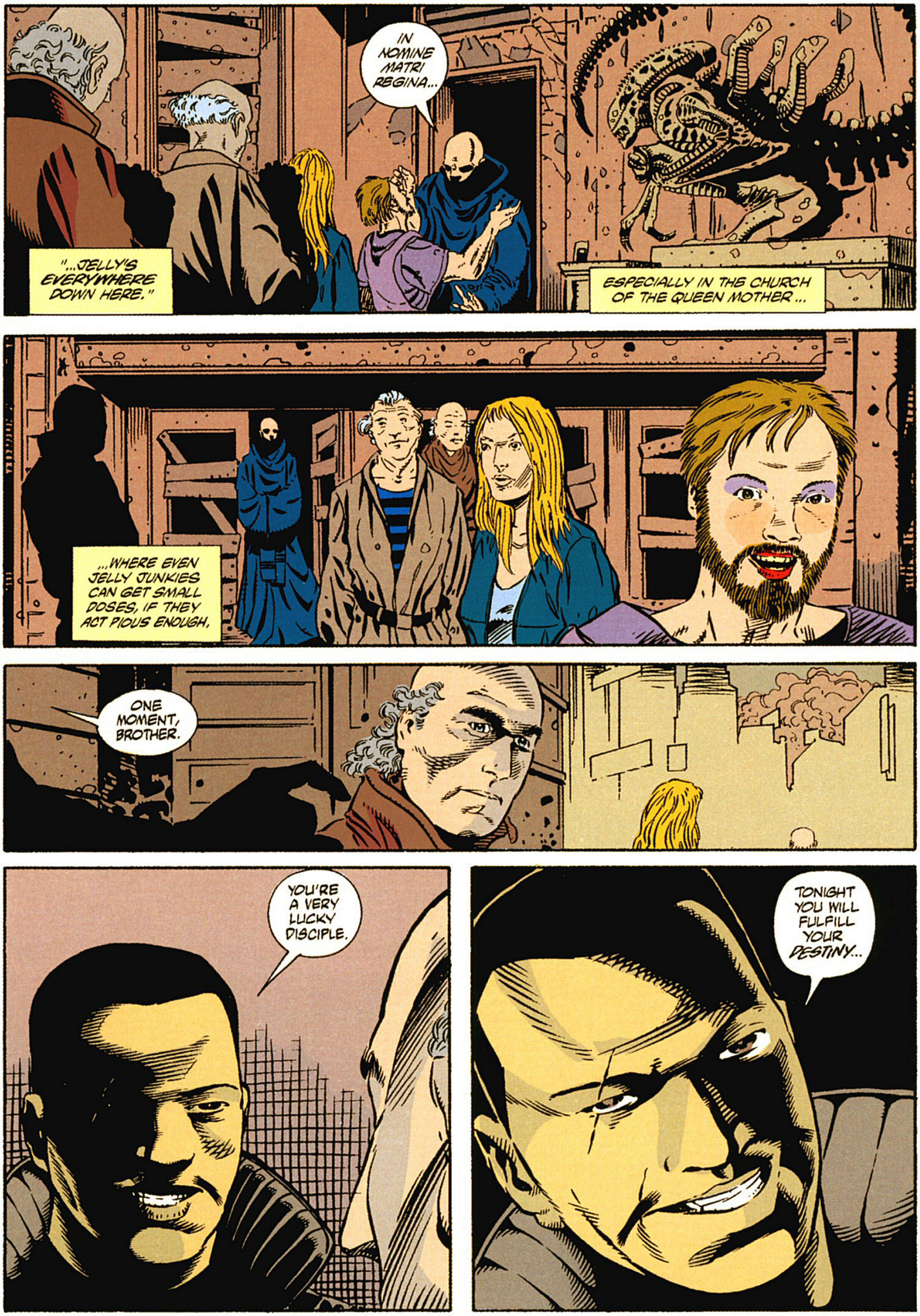

WE DON'T HAVE ONE.
WHAT!
THE FACT IS, THE SUPPORT SYSTEMS ARE ASTRONOMICAL. THERE'S JUST NO MONEY FOR ONE.
NO MONEY? WHAT THE HELL DO YOU MEAN?
IT'S MR. KEENE, MR. EDDINGTON. HE SAID THE SETUP WAS SO EXPENSIVE--THE CAGE, THE EQUIPMENT, NOT TO MENTION GETTING THE EGG--THAT THERE WASN'T ANY MONEY LEFT FOR A CLONE.
IT'S NOT US. WE'RE ONLY MAKING ENOUGH MONEY TO GET BY ON.
SO WHAT DO WE DO?
WE USE A LIVE SUBJECT.
KILL SOME-ONE?
NO, NO, I DON'T WANT THAT.
IT'S NOT LIKE MURDER. THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO ACTUALLY WANT TO HATCH ONE OF THOSE THINGS. RELIGIOUS NUTS.
SO... WHERE WOULD YOU FIND THESE... PEOPLE?
I ASKED KEENE. HE SAID TO ASK AHIRO.
"AHIRO?"
"HE WORKS FOR KEENE. AND FOR US, WHEN WE WANT HIM."

NO FLY ZONE
CHURCH OF THE QUEEN MOTHER
"HE'S OUT THERE RIGHT NOW..."
AND THERE WERE OTHER HUNTERS IN THE NIGHT.
WE'RE GETTING CLOSER TO PREGLEY HALL, CHIEF.
DON'T WORRY. CONCERT'S LONG OVER. THAT'S WHY WE WAITED SO LATE.
WHAT'S TO WORRY, WHEN WE'RE WALKING THROUGH MANHATTAN...
...WITH THIS?
NO FLY ZONE


SO FAR, SO GOOD, RIGHT?
SO FAR. BUT WHAT IF HE GETS TICKED?
THE JACKET'S MESH AND THE MUZZLE'S ALLOY. OL' BLUE'S NOT SCRATCHIN' OR BITIN' ANYBODY.
AT LEAST NOT TILL WE FIND THE SONSABITCHES WHO STOLE MEDTECH'S EGG.
MT
COME ON, BLUE. SNIFF THOSE PHEROMONES, BOY. THEY'RE FROM YOUR HIVE--FIND THAT EGG, BUDDY...
IN THE NEXT ALLEY, A JELLY DEAL IS GOING DOWN.
FOR JUST A MOMENT...
...THE PHEROMONES OF A HIVE ARE RELEASED INTO THE AIR.
BUT NOT BLUE'S HIVE.

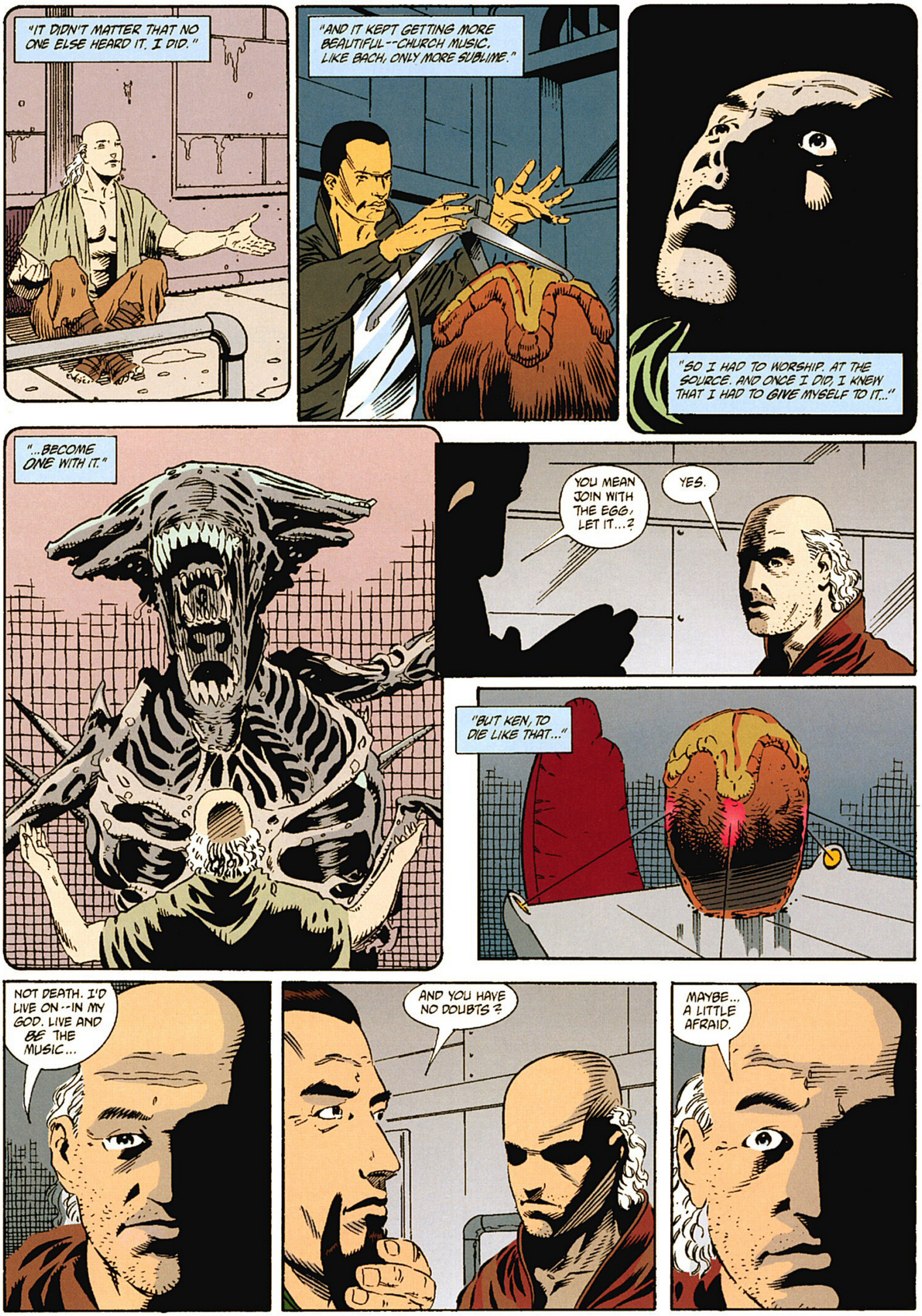

AND ANY HIVE NOT ONE'S OWN...
...IS AN ENEMY.
AND WHAT IS AN ENEMY...
...MUST BE DESTROYED.
AND WHILE THE ALIEN COULD NEITHER BITE NOR TEAR, HE COULD SCREAM...


...AND CRUSH.
HE KEPT SLAMMING THEM AGAINST THE BRICKS UNTIL BONES SPLIT, SKULLS CRACKED, AND BITS OF BRAIN SHOWERED THE ALLEY.
BY THE TIME THE MEN WERE DEAD, THE SCENT, IMPURE AND WEAK THROUGH DISTILLATION AND REFINING, WAS GONE.
SO WAS THE FURY.
MT
JEEZ...
DAMN JELLY MUSTA SET HIM OFF.
LET'S GET HIM BACK BEFORE SOME-BODY VIDS US. CAN'T LET THIS HAPPEN AGAIN...

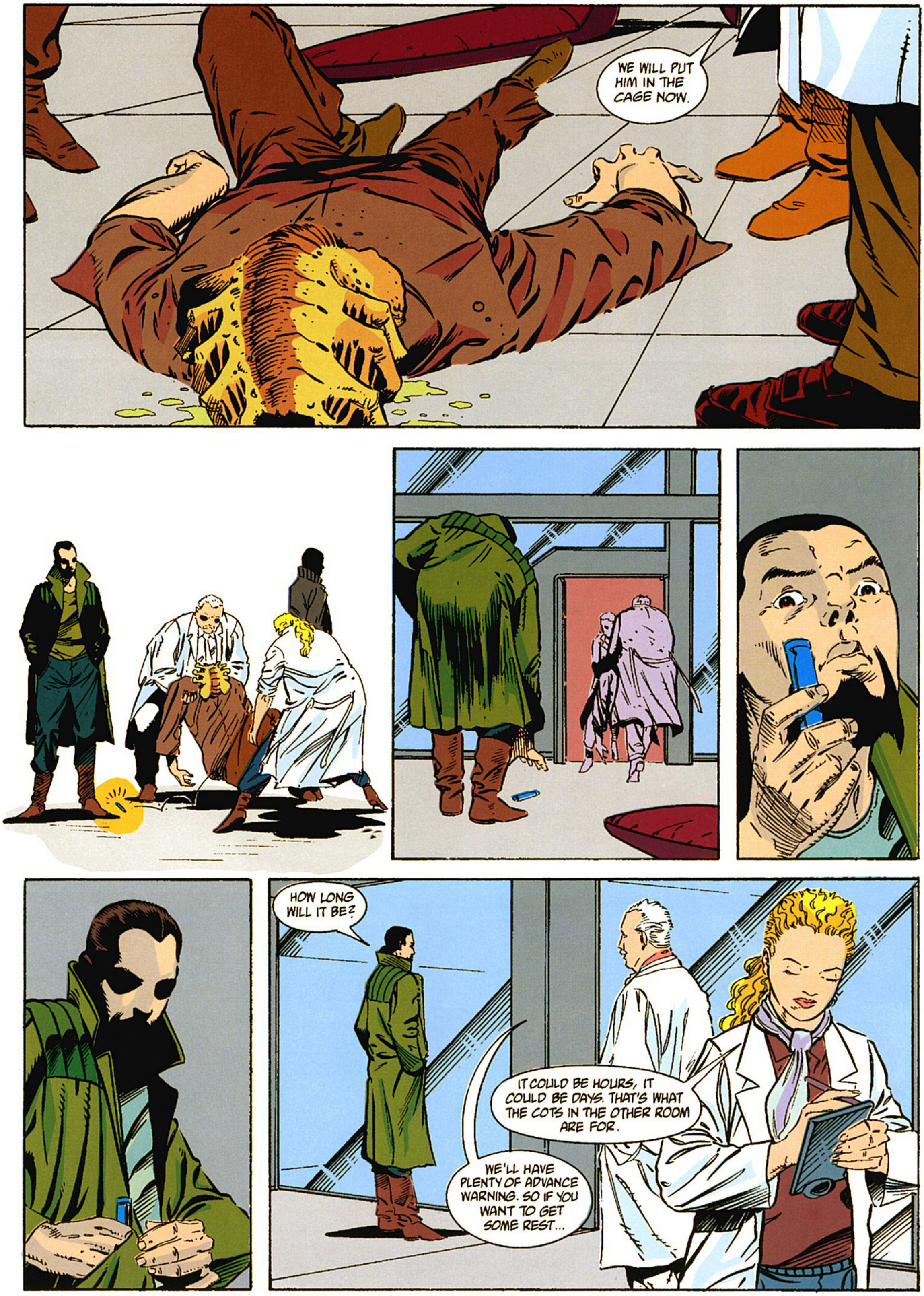

IN NOMINE MATRI REGINA...
"...JELLY'S EVERYWHERE DOWN HERE."
ESPECIALLY IN THE CHURCH OF THE QUEEN MOTHER...
...WHERE EVEN JELLY JUNKIES CAN GET SMALL DOSES, IF THEY ACT PIOUS ENOUGH.
ONE MOMENT, BROTHER.
YOU'RE A VERY LUCKY DISCIPLE.
TONIGHT YOU WILL FULFILL YOUR DESTINY...

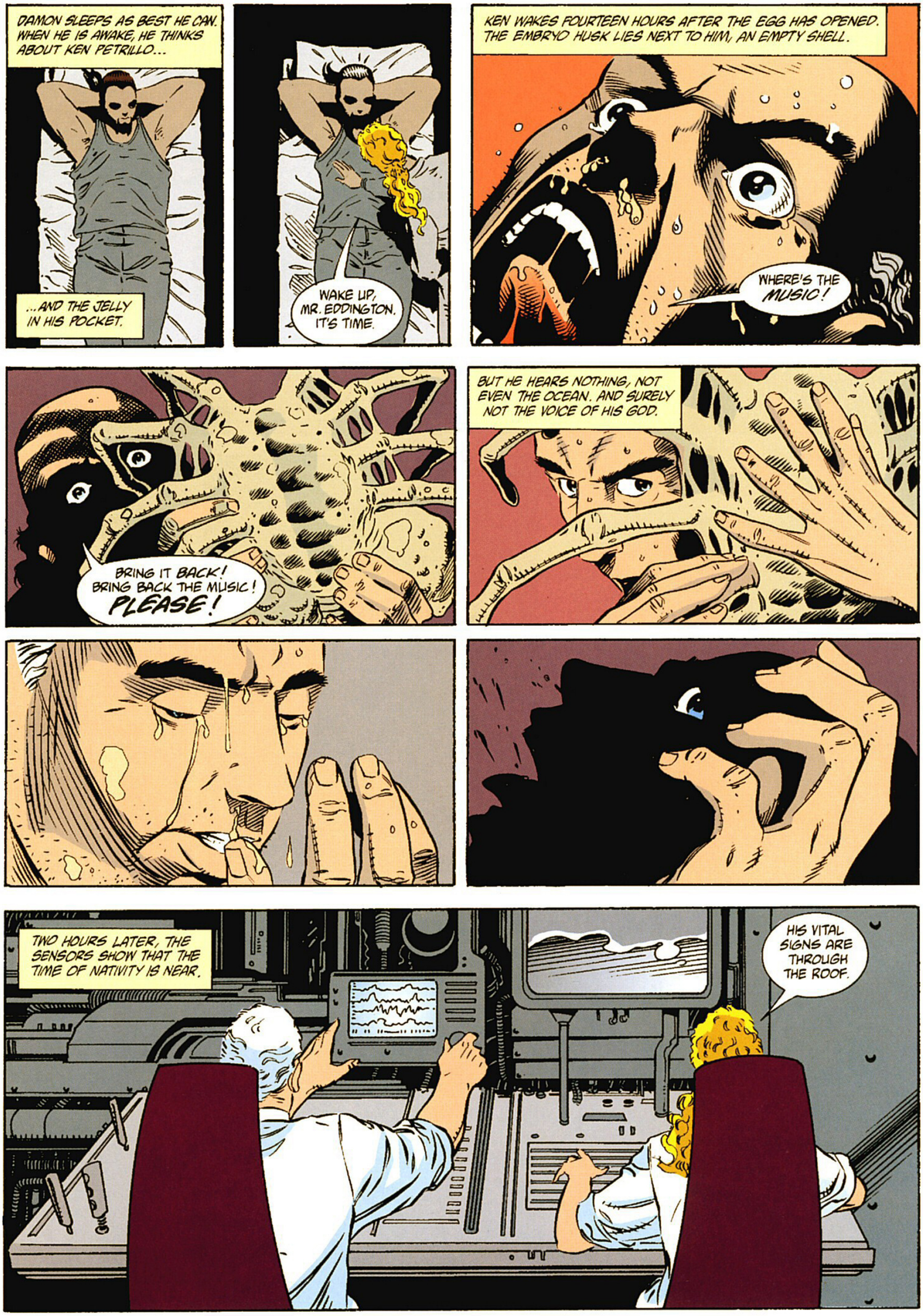
SO YOU WANT THIS ALIEN FOR...?
FOR THE MUSIC. THE PURE SOUND OF IT.
THE SOUND OF HATRED. RAGE. FURY.
I THINK IT'S GREAT--SCIENCE SERVING THE ARTS. ESPECIALLY YOUR ART, MR. EDDINGTON.
YOU HAVE NO DESIRE TO STUDY IT IN ANY OTHER WAY?
I'M NOT A SCIENTIST. I'M A COMPOSER.
I WANT THIS EGG TO HATCH, AND THIS THING TO BE BORN SHRIEKING, IN BLOOD. I WANT IT TO FIGHT AND KILL AND SCREAM. AND I WANT TO RECORD EVERY SOUND.
AND IT IS SOUND THAT STARTLES THEM NOW--THE SOUND OF THE APIARY DOOR BANGING OPEN.
AHIRO HAS FOUND A CULTIST TO HATCH THE EGG...
...A CULTIST DAMON EDDINGTON RECOGNIZES.
...KEN?

HELLO, DAMON.
YOU KNOW HIM?
HE'S THE BEST GUITARIST I'VE EVER HEARD. I WANT TO TALK TO HIM.
I STARTED WITH THE JELLY, DAMON. A NEW HIGH. NOT REALLY DIFFERENT AT FIRST, BUT THEN I STARTED TO HEAR THE MUSIC.
"THE MUSIC?"
"MUSIC I HEARD WHEN I PLAYED. I NEVER PLAYED LIKE THAT BEFORE. SOME PEOPLE SAID IT WAS WORSE, BUT I HEARD IT AS BETTER. SO I TOOK MORE OF THE STUFF."
"AND THE MORE I TOOK, THE BETTER I SOUNDED."
"AFTER A WHILE I DIDN'T NEED MY GUITAR AT ALL. ALL I HAD TO DO WAS MOVE MY FINGERS TO HEAR THE MUSIC."
WONG'S
XXX SHOW ALL-NUDE XXX
"AND THEN I DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TO DO THAT."

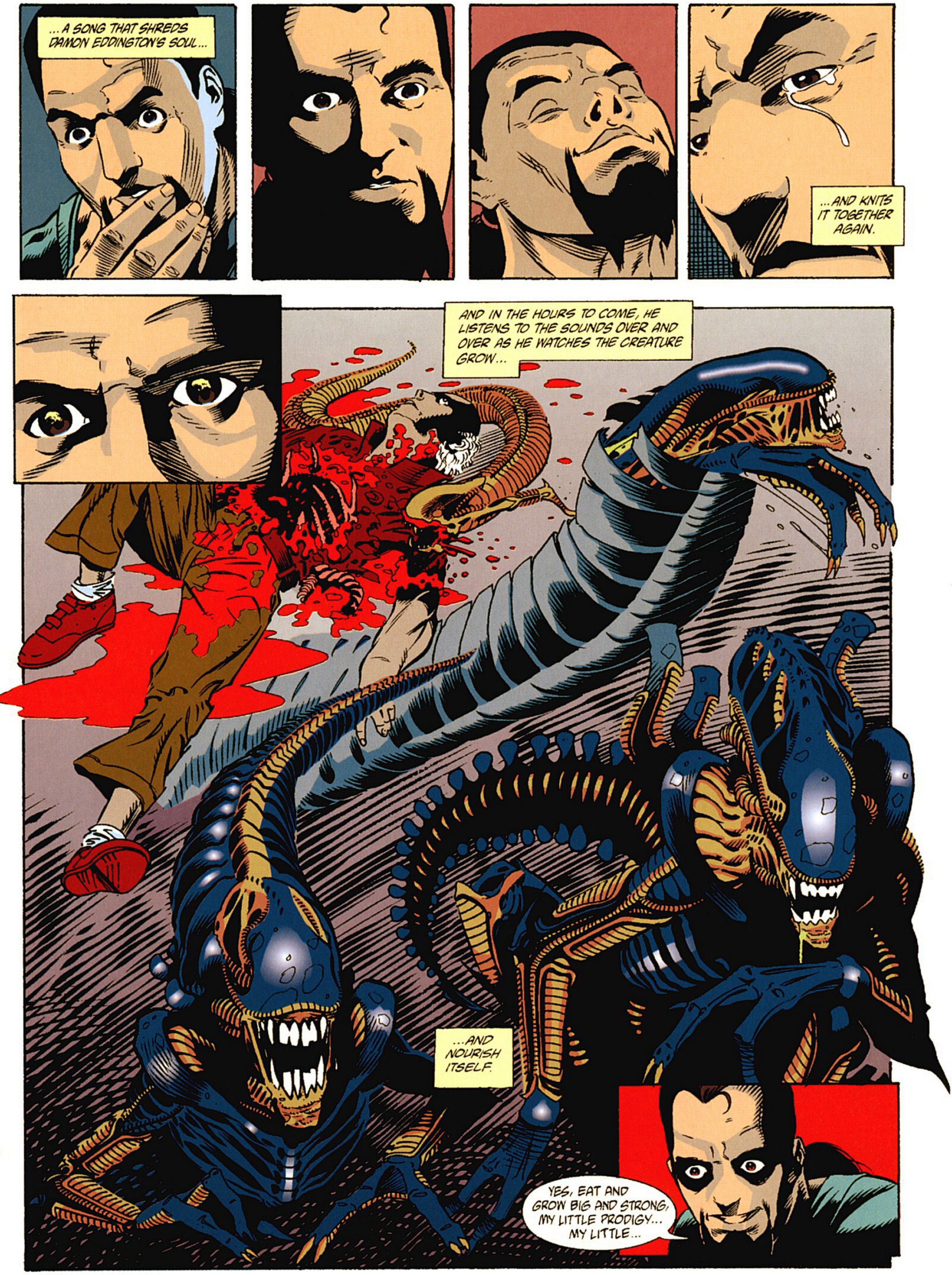

"IT DIDN'T MATTER THAT NO ONE ELSE HEARD IT. I DID."
"AND IT KEPT GETTING MORE BEAUTIFUL--CHURCH MUSIC. LIKE BACH, ONLY MORE SUBLIME."
"SO I HAD TO WORSHIP. AT THE SOURCE. AND ONCE I DID, I KNEW THAT I HAD TO GIVE MYSELF TO IT..."
"...BECOME ONE WITH IT."
YOU MEAN JOIN WITH THE EGG, LET IT...?
YES.
"BUT KEN, TO DIE LIKE THAT..."
NOT DEATH. I'D LIVE ON--IN MY GOD. LIVE AND BE THE MUSIC...
AND YOU HAVE NO DOUBTS?
MAYBE... A LITTLE AFRAID.

IT IS TIME.
JUST A LITTLE...
NO, WAIT, I...


WE WILL PUT HIM IN THE CAGE NOW.
HOW LONG WILL IT BE?
IT COULD BE HOURS, IT COULD BE DAYS. THAT'S WHAT THE COTS IN THE OTHER ROOM ARE FOR.
WE'LL HAVE PLENTY OF ADVANCE WARNING. SO IF YOU WANT TO GET SOME REST...

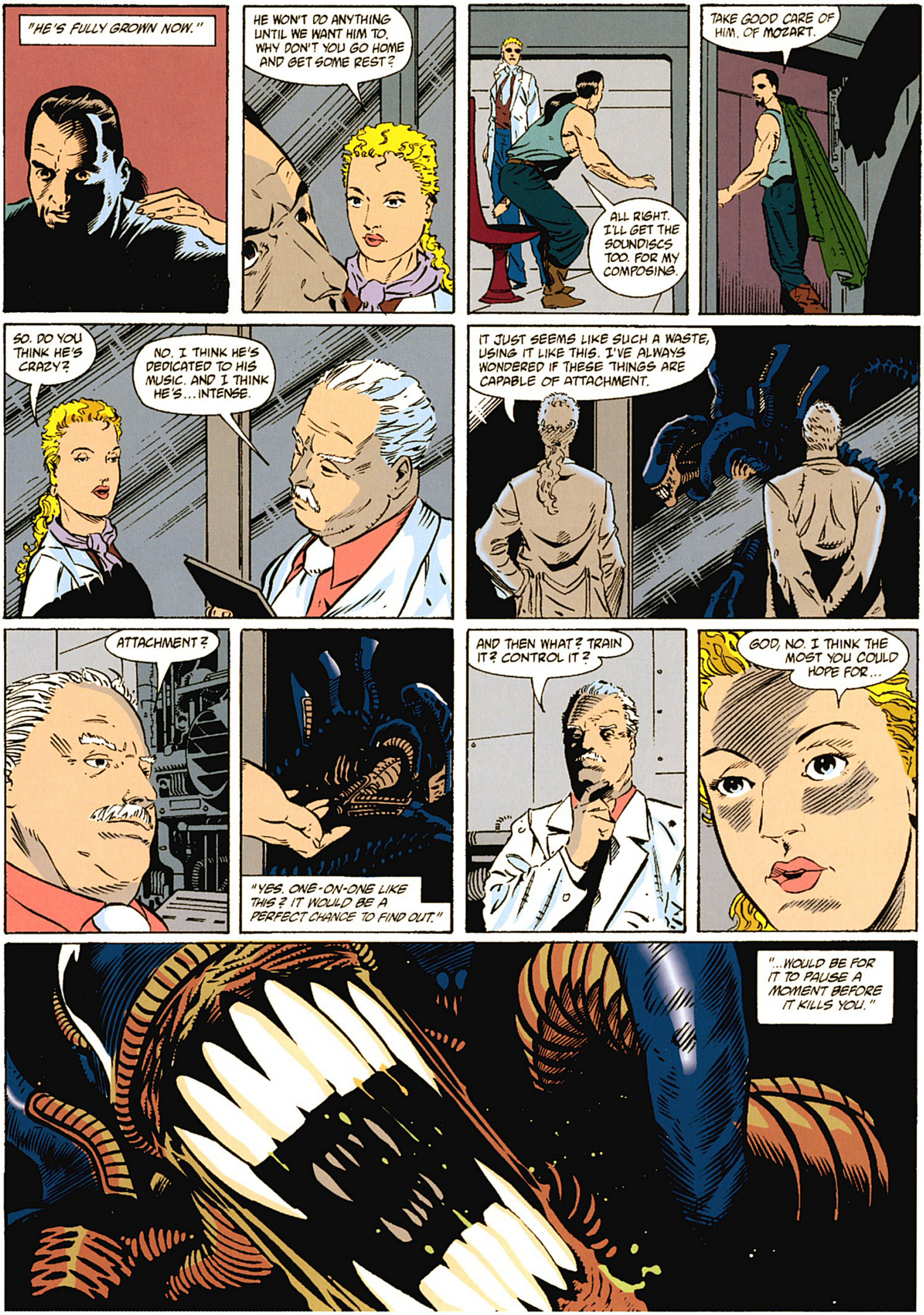

DAMON SLEEPS AS BEST HE CAN. WHEN HE IS AWAKE, HE THINKS ABOUT KEN PETRILLO...
...AND THE JELLY IN HIS POCKET.
WAKE UP, MR. EDDINGTON. IT'S TIME.
KEN WAKES FOURTEEN HOURS AFTER THE EGG HAS OPENED. THE EMBRYO HUSK LIES NEXT TO HIM, AN EMPTY SHELL.
WHERE'S THE MUSIC!
BRING IT BACK! BRING BACK THE MUSIC! PLEASE!
BUT HE HEARS NOTHING, NOT EVEN THE OCEAN. AND SURELY NOT THE VOICE OF HIS GOD.
TWO HOURS LATER, THE SENSORS SHOW THAT THE TIME OF NATIVITY IS NEAR.
HIS VITAL SIGNS ARE THROUGH THE ROOF.

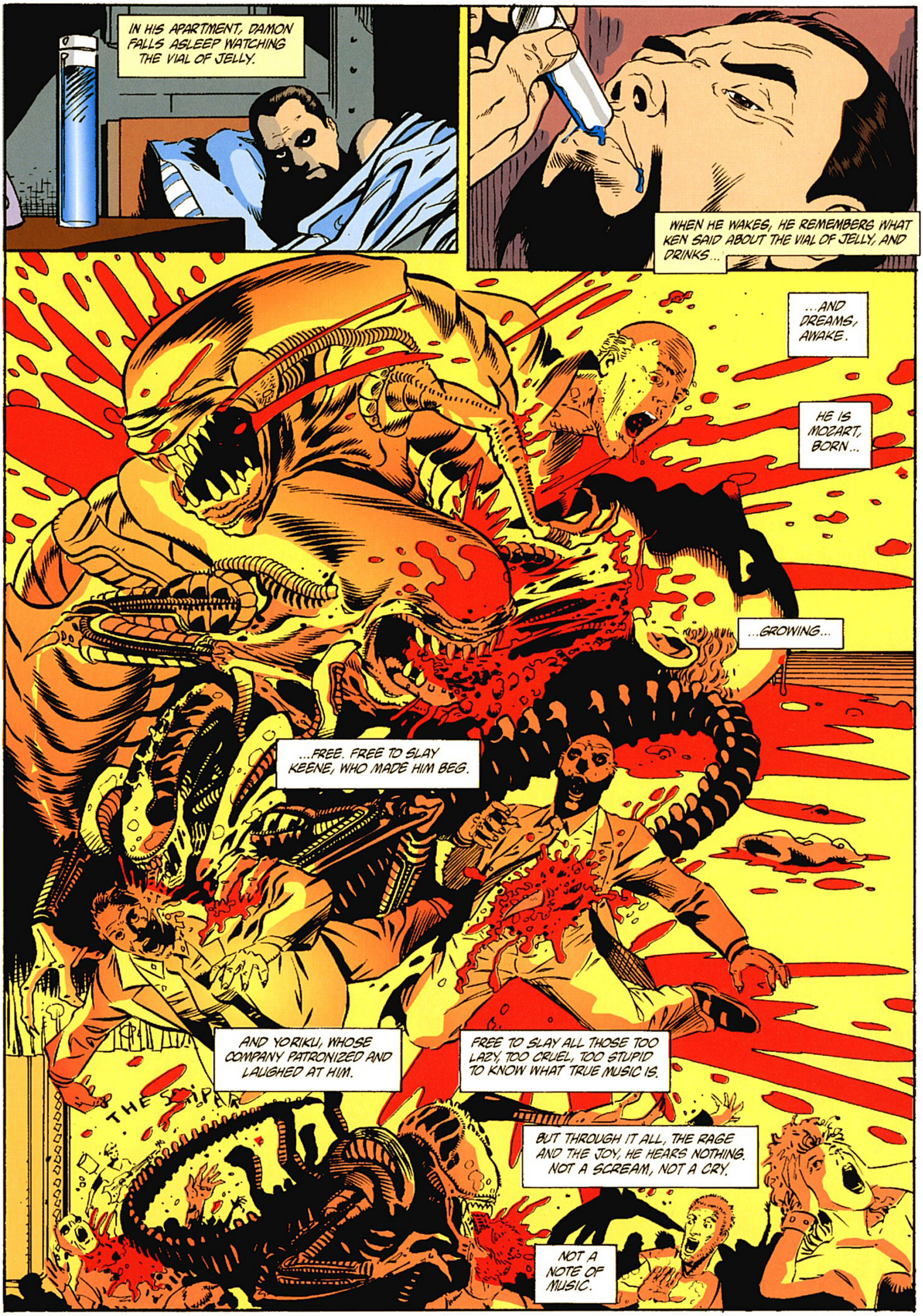
DAMON READIES HIS RECORDING DEVICES.
VANCE AND BRANGWEN STAND BY THE VIDISC MACHINE.
AND THE BIRTH PANGS BEGIN...
...BECOMING PAIN SO GREAT THAT...
...THE HOST FALLS TO THE GROUND IN AGONY.
BUT THE WEIGHT OF A MAN IS NO IMPEDIMENT TO BIRTH.
AND THE NEWBORN CREATURE SINGS A MELODY OF SEARED FLESH AND SPILLED BLOOD...


...A SONG THAT SHREDS DAMON EDDINGTON'S SOUL...
...AND KNITS IT TOGETHER AGAIN.
AND IN THE HOURS TO COME, HE LISTENS TO THE SOUNDS OVER AND OVER AS HE WATCHES THE CREATURE GROW...
...AND NOURISH ITSELF.
YES, EAT AND GROW BIG AND STRONG, MY LITTLE PRODIGY... MY LITTLE...

...MOZART.
IT IS THE RIGHT NAME. SO YOUNG, SO TALENTED...AND WITH SUCH AN APPETITE.

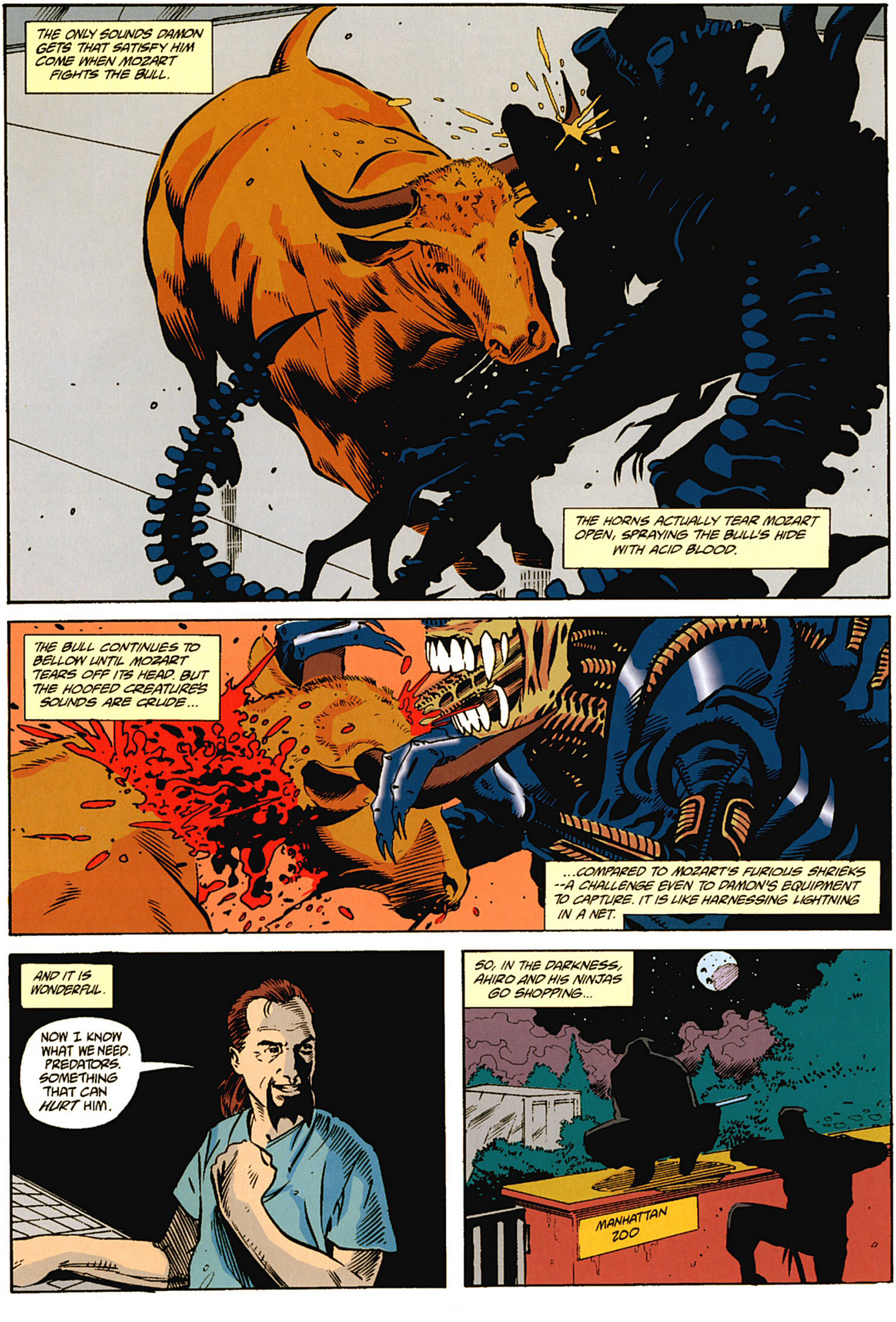
AND AS DAMON WATCHES HIS CHILD GROW, HE FEELS THE RAGE IT BEARS IN ITS EVERY MOVEMENT.
DAMON EDDINGTON KNOWS WHAT IT IS TO BE AN ALIEN...
...NOT AT HOME IN THIS WORLD...
...UNAPPRECIATED AND MISUNDERSTOOD...
...AND THIS BEING IS THE PHYSICAL MANIFESTATION OF ALL HIS FRUSTRATION AND WRATH.
THIS BEING IS PERFECT, ITS VOICE SCRIABIN'S POEM OF ECSTASY AND POEM OF FIRE IN ONE.


"HE'S FULLY GROWN NOW."
HE WON'T DO ANYTHING UNTIL WE WANT HIM TO. WHY DON'T YOU GO HOME AND GET SOME REST?
ALL RIGHT. I'LL GET THE SOUNDISCS TOO. FOR MY COMPOSING.
TAKE GOOD CARE OF HIM. OF MOZART.
SO. DO YOU THINK HE'S CRAZY?
NO. I THINK HE'S DEDICATED TO HIS MUSIC. AND I THINK HE'S... INTENSE.
IT JUST SEEMS LIKE SUCH A WASTE, USING IT LIKE THIS. I'VE ALWAYS WONDERED IF THESE THINGS ARE CAPABLE OF ATTACHMENT.
ATTACHMENT?
"YES. ONE-ON-ONE LIKE THIS? IT WOULD BE A PERFECT CHANCE TO FIND OUT."
AND THEN WHAT? TRAIN IT? CONTROL IT?
GOD, NO. I THINK THE MOST YOU COULD HOPE FOR...
"...WOULD BE FOR IT TO PAUSE A MOMENT BEFORE IT KILLS YOU."


IN HIS APARTMENT, DAMON FALLS ASLEEP WATCHING THE VIAL OF JELLY.
WHEN HE WAKES, HE REMEMBERS WHAT KEN SAID ABOUT THE VIAL OF JELLY, AND DRINKS...
...AND DREAMS, AWAKE.
HE IS MOZART, BORN...
...GROWING...
...FREE. FREE TO SLAY KEENE, WHO MADE HIM BEG.
AND YORIKU, WHOSE COMPANY PATRONIZED AND LAUGHED AT HIM.
FREE TO SLAY ALL THOSE TOO LAZY, TOO CRUEL, TOO STUPID TO KNOW WHAT TRUE MUSIC IS.
BUT THROUGH IT ALL, THE RAGE AND THE JOY, HE HEARS NOTHING. NOT A SCREAM, NOT A CRY.
NOT A NOTE OF MUSIC.

WHEN HE WAKES, ONE THOUGHT POSSESSES HIM.
I WANT TO HEAR IT!
SING FOR ME! DAMN YOU, SCREAM! COME ON!
BUT MOZART ONLY HISSES, SOFT AND LOW, AND RETREATS INTO THE DARKNESS AT THE REAR OF HIS CAGE.
GET SOMETHING FOR HIM. SOMETHING HE CAN FIGHT--SOMETHING HE CAN KILL.
WHAT?
I DON'T CARE--ANIMALS--SOMETHING ALIVE!

BRANGWEN RETURNS FROM THE ANIMAL SHELTER WITHIN THE HOUR.
VANCE LOADS THE ANIMALS INTO MOZART'S CAGE.
THESE ARE FOR YOU.
DAMON TENSES, AND PUSHES THE RECORD BUTTON AS THE ALIEN STALKS TOWARD THE ANIMALS.
BUT MOZART GIVES ONLY A SHORT HISS, LIKE HOT STEEL THRUST IN WATER, AND DAMON FANCIES HE HEARS AMUSEMENT AND CONTEMPT IN IT.
FOR MOZART, DESTROYING CATS AND DOGS IS NO MORE A CHALLENGE THAN MEN STEPPING ON ANTS.
IT'S NOT ENOUGH. GET SOMETHING BIGGER --SHEEP, COWS, BULLS, FOR GOD'S SAKE...
CALLS ARE MADE, ORDERS ARE PLACED. A FEW MORE CRATES ARE HARDLY NOTICED...
PRESLEY HALL LOADING AREA
...EVEN IF THE CRATES HAVE HOLES.
BORNEO
ESTOCK


THE ONLY SOUNDS DAMON GETS THAT SATISFY HIM COME WHEN MOZART FIGHTS THE BULL.
THE HORNS ACTUALLY TEAR MOZART OPEN, SPRAYING THE BULL'S HIDE WITH ACID BLOOD.
THE BULL CONTINUES TO BELLOW UNTIL MOZART TEARS OFF ITS HEAD. BUT THE HOOFED CREATURE'S SOUNDS ARE CRUDE...
...COMPARED TO MOZART'S FURIOUS SHRIEKS --A CHALLENGE EVEN TO DAMON'S EQUIPMENT TO CAPTURE. IT IS LIKE HARNESSING LIGHTNING IN A NET.
AND IT IS WONDERFUL.
NOW I KNOW WHAT WE NEED. PREDATORS. SOMETHING THAT CAN HURT HIM.
SO, IN THE DARKNESS, AHIRO AND HIS NINJAS GO SHOPPING...
MANHATTAN ZOO

...AS DOES DAMON. BUT THE ALIEN JELLY MUDDIES HIS MIND RATHER THAN CLEARS IT.
HE WATCHES MOZART FOR HOURS ON END, NEITHER OF THEM AT REST. SOMETIMES HE SPEAKS TO MOZART, BUT MORE OFTEN TO HIMSELF.
I CAN FEEL YOU--YOUR RAGE. BUT WHY CAN'T I HEAR YOUR MUSIC? SING FOR ME, SO THAT I CAN SING FOR YOU. GIVE ME MORE... MORE...
WE HAVE A BEAST FOR IT TO FIGHT.
WHAT IS IT?
IT IS FAST. WITH FANGS AND CLAWS.
A GROWL RUMBLES FROM THE CAGE, FILLED WITH SO MUCH SAVAGERY THAT DAMON GIGGLES AT THE THOUGHT OF WHAT IS TO COME.

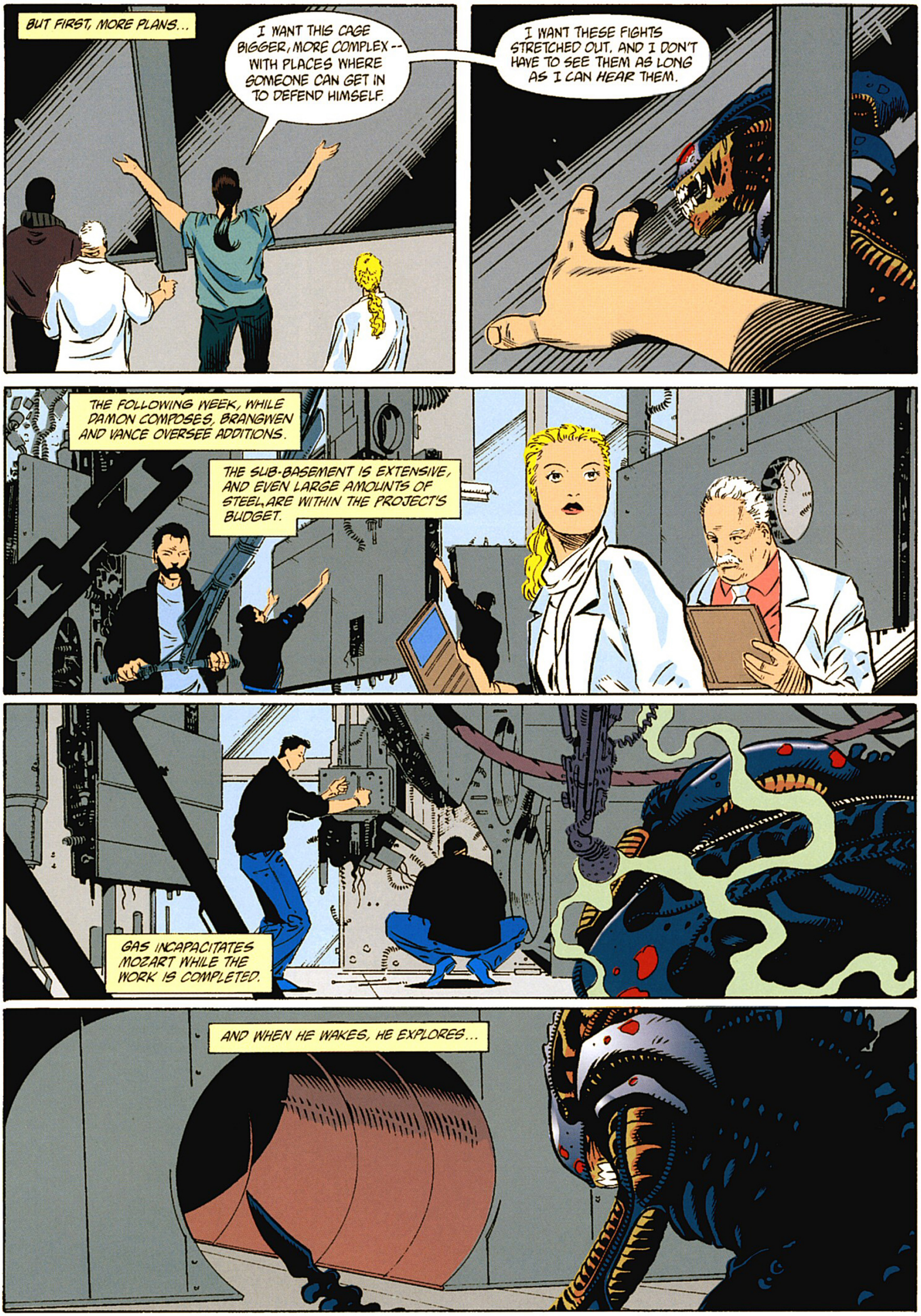
HE FEELS A SENSE OF ANTICIPATION HE HAS NOT KNOWN SINCE HE WAS A BOY.
I'M READY.

THE PANTHER LEAPS TO THE ATTACK. MOZART FALLS BACK FOR A MOMENT.
THE GIANT CAT'S CLAWS TEAR THROUGH HIS CARAPACE, AND WHEN IT BURIES ITS SNOUT IN HIS MIDSECTION, MOZART SCREAMS.
TO DAMON, THE SOUND IS EXQUISITE AND ORGASMIC, AND HE THINKS OF THE MUSIC HE WILL BLEND WITH IT--PHRASES FROM HENZE, CORIGLIANO, SHOSTAKOVICH, HONEGGER--THOSE TWENTIETH CENTURY APOSTLES OF RAGE.
BUT THEN...
...THE MUSIC STOPS.
TIM H. AND TIM B. 1993

THE PANTHER IS DEAD.
NO! NO, DAMN IT, IT WAS TOO EASY!
IT WASN'T ENOUGH... I NEED MORE.
MR. EDDINGTON... PERHAPS ANOTHER ANIMAL?
"ANOTHER? HELL, AHIRO, NO ANIMAL'S VICIOUS ENOUGH TO KEEP MOZART BUSY LONG ENOUGH TO GET WHAT I WANT!"
"THERE IS ONE, MR. EDDINGTON. GIVE ME TIME...TO CAPTURE IT."

SO DAMON WORKS WITH WHAT HE HAS, CREATING THE MUSICAL STRUCTURE INTO WHICH HE FITS THE ALIEN CRIES...
...OF WHICH HE NEEDS MANY, MANY MORE.
VANCE TENDS TO MOZART, FEEDING HIM, ANALYZING HIM, SPEAKING SOFT WORDS TO HIM, AND SMILING AT AN EYELESS FACE.
BRANGWEN WATCHES THEM BOTH, FASCINATED BY DAMON, AMUSED BY VANCE.
AND ALL OF THEM WAIT FOR AHIRO TO BRING THE BEAST.
THEN, THREE DAYS LATER, HE RETURNS --WITH NOT ONE, BUT FIVE CREATURES.
THE DRUG WILL KEEP THEM ASLEEP UNTIL... THEY ARE NEEDED.

YOU'RE JOKING! MY GOD, HOW CAN A MAN SURVIVE WITH A THING THAT KILLS BULLS AND PANTHERS IN MINUTES?
HE CAN WITH THIS.
IT WILL NOT PRODUCE ENOUGH ELECTRICITY TO KILL THE ALIEN, BUT IT WILL CAUSE IT GREAT PAIN.
WAIT JUST A DAMN MINUTE-- WHERE'D THESE GUYS COME FROM?
FROM THE WORST BARS AND DRUG CLUBS IN THE CITY.
"STILL THEY'RE HUMAN BEINGS!"
YOU WEREN'T SO SENSITIVE ABOUT KEN'S WELL-BEING.
BUT HE WAS A CULTIST.
AND THESE MEN ARE DRUNKARDS AND ADDICTS AND CRIMINALS. LEFT ALONE, MOST OF THEM WILL BE DEAD WITHIN THE YEAR. BUT...
...THE DECISION, AFTER ALL, IS MR. EDDINGTON'S.
AND FROM THE LOOK IN DAMON'S EYES, THEY ALL KNOW THE DECISION HE HAS MADE.

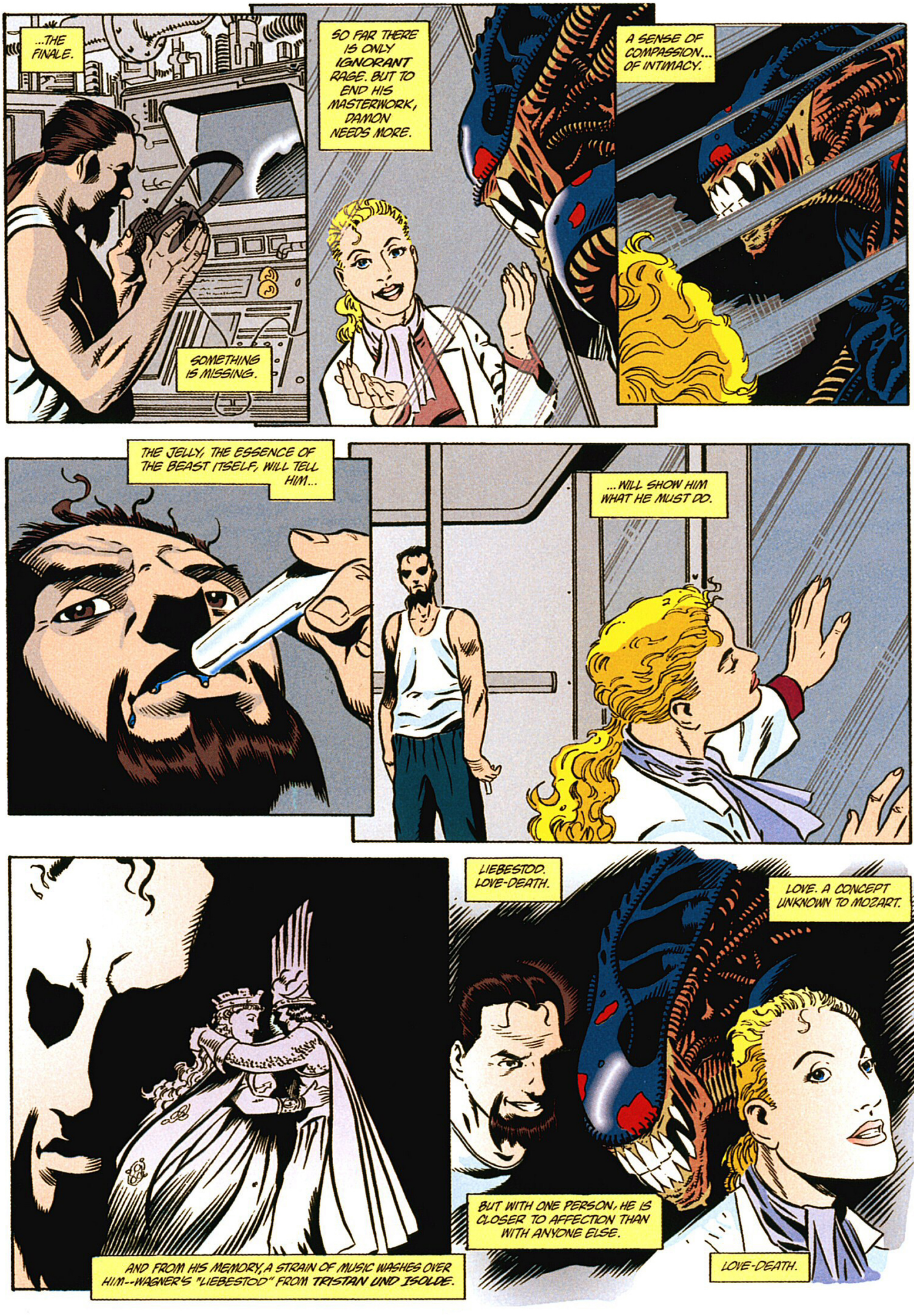

BUT FIRST, MORE PLANS...
I WANT THIS CAGE BIGGER, MORE COMPLEX -- WITH PLACES WHERE SOMEONE CAN GET IN TO DEFEND HIMSELF.
I WANT THESE FIGHTS STRETCHED OUT, AND I DON'T HAVE TO SEE THEM AS LONG AS I CAN HEAR THEM.
THE FOLLOWING WEEK, WHILE DAMON COMPOSES, BRANGWEN AND VANCE OVERSEE ADDITIONS.
THE SUB-BASEMENT IS EXTENSIVE, AND EVEN LARGE AMOUNTS OF STEEL ARE WITHIN THE PROJECT'S BUDGET.
GAS INCAPACITATES MOZART WHILE THE WORK IS COMPLETED.
AND WHEN HE WAKES, HE EXPLORES...

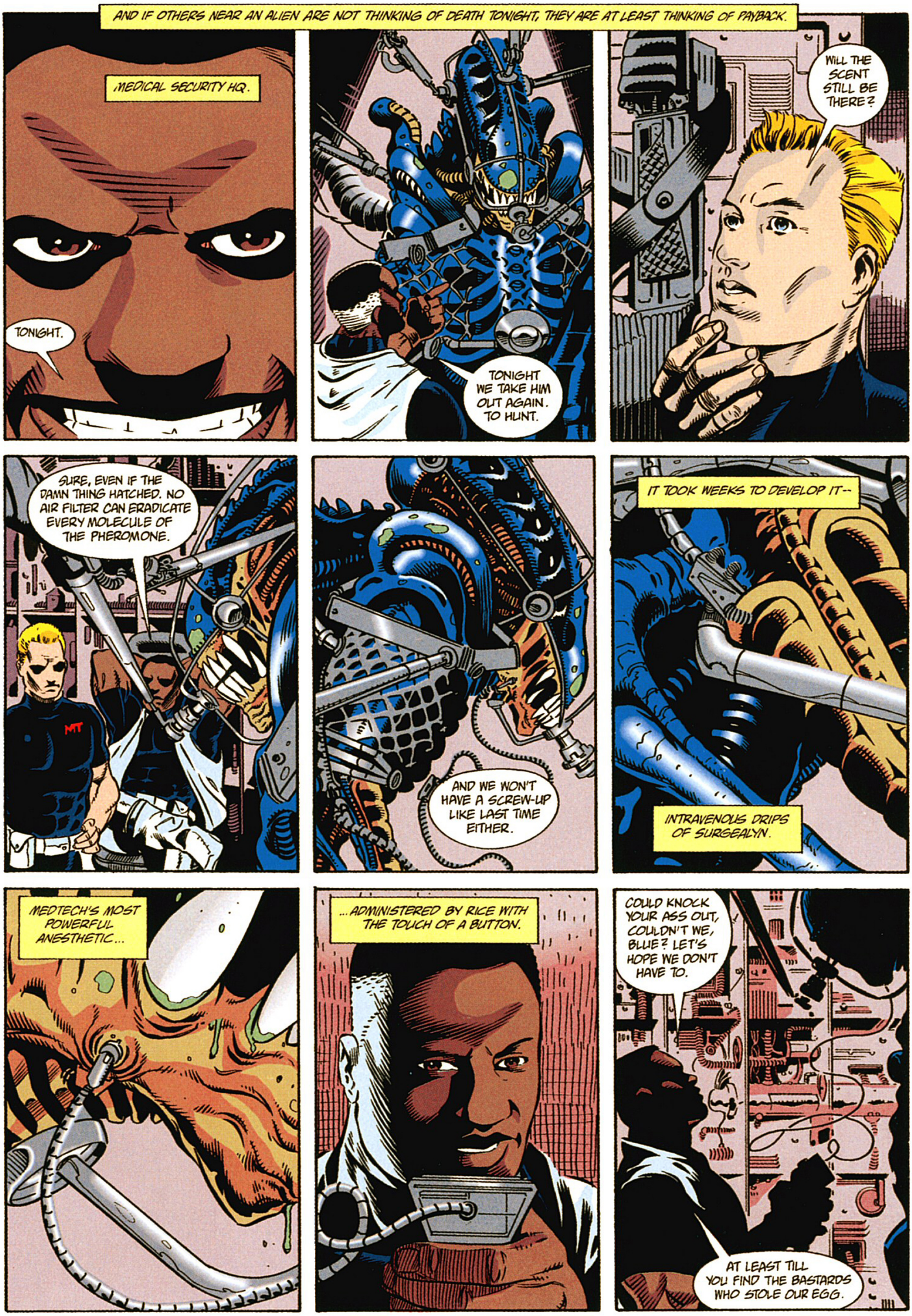
...TUNNELS THAT MOZART AND HIS QUARRY CAN PASS THROUGH...
...SLANTED, NARROWING PASSAGES INTO WHICH A MAN MIGHT SQUEEZE, BUT NOT A SEVEN-AND-A-HALF-FOOT-TALL ALIEN...
...REAPPEARING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CAGE.
THEY PLACE THE FIRST MAN INSIDE THE FEEDER CAGE, THEN WAKE HIM.
"THE WEAPON AT YOUR SIDE IS AN ELECTROSTUN."
"IT IS EFFECTIVE ONLY WITHIN THREE FEET OF THE CREATURE."
THE HARDER YOU FIGHT, THE LONGER YOU STAY ALIVE.
NO, PLEASE!
"IF YOU REMAIN IN THIS SMALL CAGE, IT WILL KILL YOU INSTANTLY."
"LEAVE, AND YOU MAY SURVIVE."

IT IS A LIE. THERE IS NO CHANCE OF SURVIVAL.
BUT THE MAN PLUNGES OUT OF THE CAGE, HIS FINGER ON THE TRIGGER.
THE SHOCK ROCKS MOZART, AND FROM HIS FANGED MOUTH ISSUES A CRY OF PAIN.
IN IT IS THE TORMENT OF A HUNDRED MEN WOUNDED IN WAR, CURSING LEAD AND STEEL...
...THE AGONY OF A THOUSAND WOMEN MADE CHILDLESS BY PLAGUE, SHRIEKING AT FATE...
...THE FURY OF A MILLION SOULS BLAZING IN HELL, SCREAMING AT GOD.
IT IS THE MOST GLORIOUS SOUND DAMON EDDINGTON HAS EVER HEARD.
AND HE WILL HEAR IT AGAIN...

...OVER...
...AND OVER...
...AND OVER, UNTIL HE HAS ENOUGH.
BUT THE MORE DAMON HEARS, THE MORE HE FEARS THAT...
...HE WILL NEVER HAVE ENOUGH.

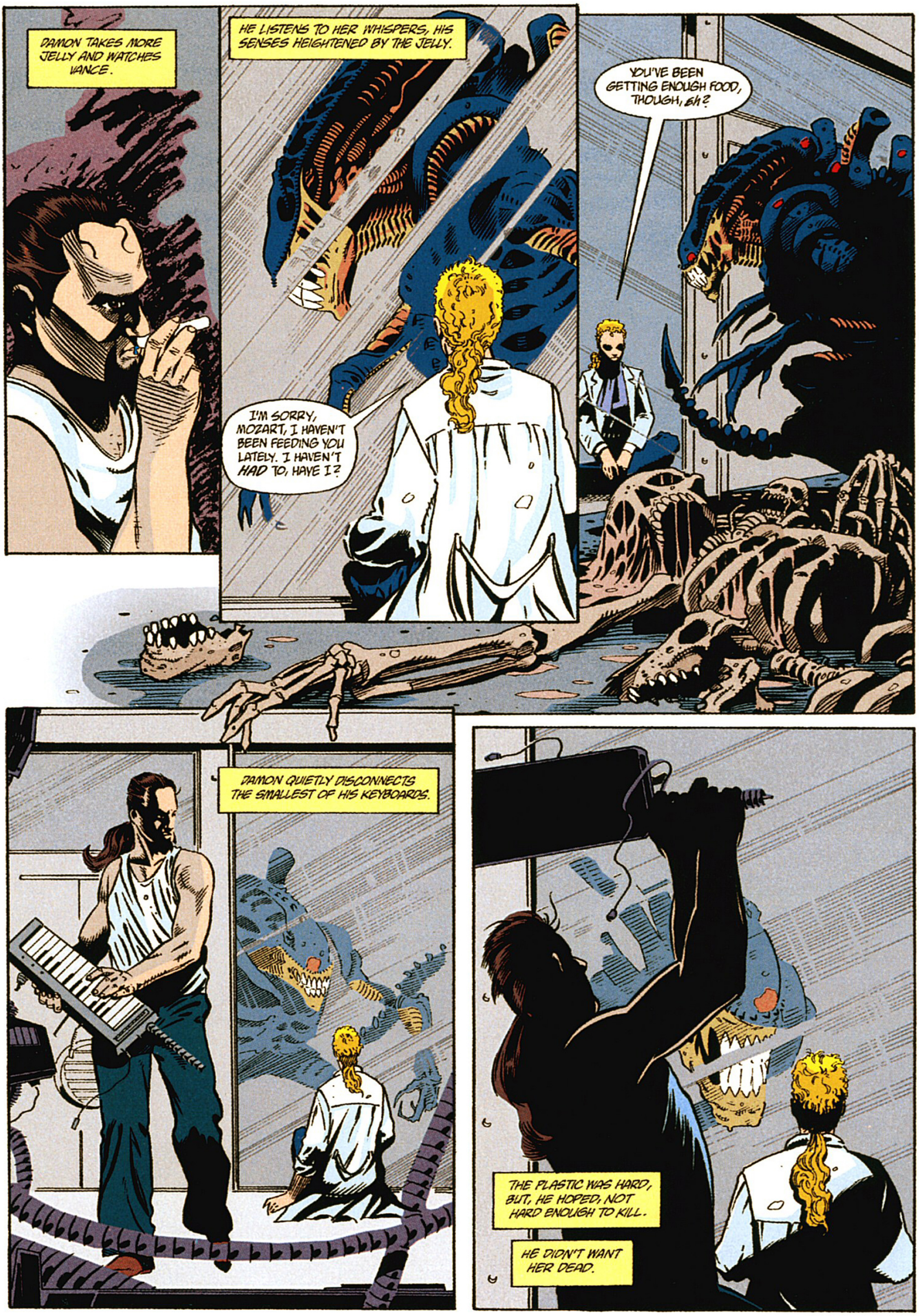
FAR BELOW PRESLEY HALL, THE MUSIC IS SPLENDID.
BLAZING AND WHITE HOT.
AND THERE IS EVER MORE OF IT...
...ACCURATELY REPRODUCED ON SYNSOUND SOUNDISCS.
AND BY THE TIME THE FIFTH MAN DIES, PIERCED BY THE SPEARS OF MOZART'S FANGS, DAMON EDDINGTON HAS ALL HE NEEDS FOR HIS GRAND COMPOSITION.
ALL EXCEPT...


...THE FINALE.
SOMETHING IS MISSING.
SO FAR THERE IS ONLY IGNORANT RAGE. BUT TO END HIS MASTERWORK, DAMON NEEDS MORE.
A SENSE OF COMPASSION... OF INTIMACY.
THE JELLY, THE ESSENCE OF THE BEAST ITSELF, WILL TELL HIM...
...WILL SHOW HIM WHAT HE MUST DO.
AND FROM HIS MEMORY, A STRAIN OF MUSIC WASHES OVER HIM--WAGNER'S "LIEBESTOD" FROM TRISTAN UND ISOLDE.
LIEBESTOD. LOVE-DEATH.
LOVE. A CONCEPT UNKNOWN TO MOZART.
BUT WITH ONE PERSON, HE IS CLOSER TO AFFECTION THAN WITH ANYONE ELSE.
LOVE-DEATH.


AND IF OTHERS NEAR AN ALIEN ARE NOT THINKING OF DEATH TONIGHT, THEY ARE AT LEAST THINKING OF PAYBACK.
MEDICAL SECURITY HQ.
TONIGHT.
TONIGHT WE TAKE HIM OUT AGAIN. TO HUNT.
WILL THE SCENT STILL BE THERE?
SURE, EVEN IF THE DAMN THING HATCHED. NO AIR FILTER CAN ERADICATE EVERY MOLECULE OF THE PHEROMONE.
AND WE WON'T HAVE A SCREW-UP LIKE LAST TIME EITHER.
IT TOOK WEEKS TO DEVELOP IT--
INTRAVENOUS DRIPS OF SURGEALYN.
MEDTECH'S MOST POWERFUL ANESTHETIC...
...ADMINISTERED BY RICE WITH THE TOUCH OF A BUTTON.
COULD KNOCK YOUR ASS OUT, COULDN'T WE, BLUE? LET'S HOPE WE DON'T HAVE TO.
AT LEAST TILL YOU FIND THE BASTARDS WHO STOLE OUR EGG.

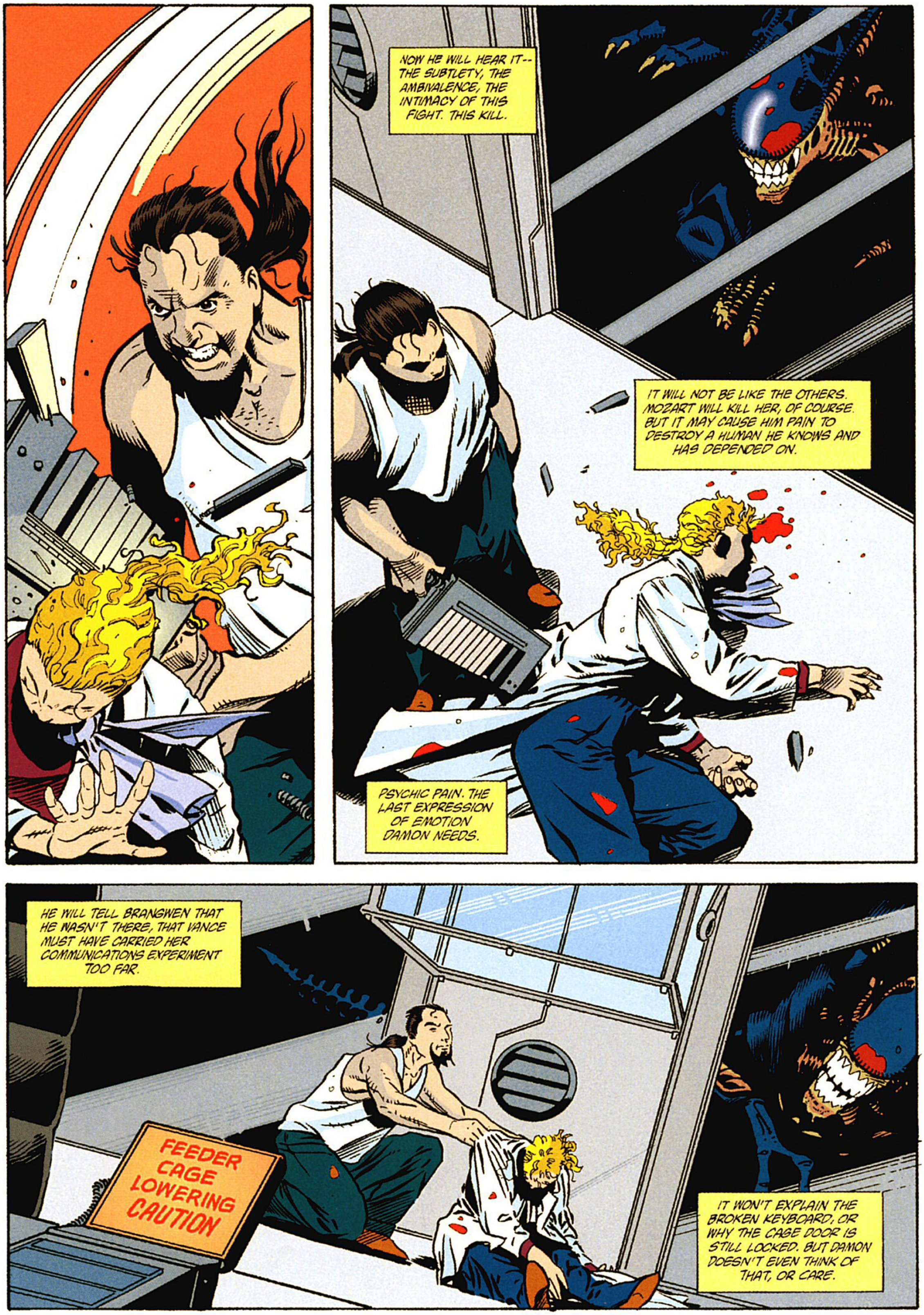
BENEATH PRESLEY HALL.
SO WHAT'S NEXT? NOW THAT YOU HAVE IT ALL?
THE EASY PART --JUST PLUG THE CRIES INTO THE CONSTRUCT I'VE ALREADY DEVELOPED.
BUT I DON'T "HAVE IT ALL."
NO? YOU MEAN...
I MEAN I NEED SOMETHING MORE --ONE MORE PIECE. I'D FACE MOZART MYSELF IF I THOUGHT IT WOULD GET ME THE SOUND.
MY GOD, WHAT MORE CAN IT DO? HOW MUCH LOUDER CAN IT SCREAM?
IT'S NOT THE VOLUME, BRANGWEN. IT'S THE QUALITY.
AND DAMON FINGERS ANOTHER VIAL IN HIS POCKET.
IT'S THE THOUGHT BEHIND THE SCREAM. WHAT CAUSES THE PAIN. PHYSICAL...
AND AGAIN HE SEES WHAT HE WANTS. WHAT HE NEEDS.
...OR EVEN... EMOTIONAL.

LOOK, MR. EDDINGTON, WHY NOT GET YOUR MIND OFF MOZART FOR A WHILE? I'VE GOT TWO PASSES TO THE HELLTONES CONCERT UPSTAIRS.
NO THANK YOU. I *HATE* THAT TRASH.
ME TOO. BUT I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE FAMILIAR WITH *ALL* ASPECTS OF CONTEMPORARY MUSIC.
IF YOU CALL THAT CRAP MUSIC.
YEAH, WELL... DARCY, YOU WANT TO GO?
NO THANKS. I'LL JUST STAY AND... OBSERVE MOZART.
OKAY. HAVE A PEACEFUL NIGHT. I'M SURE *I* WON'T. SEE YOU LATER.

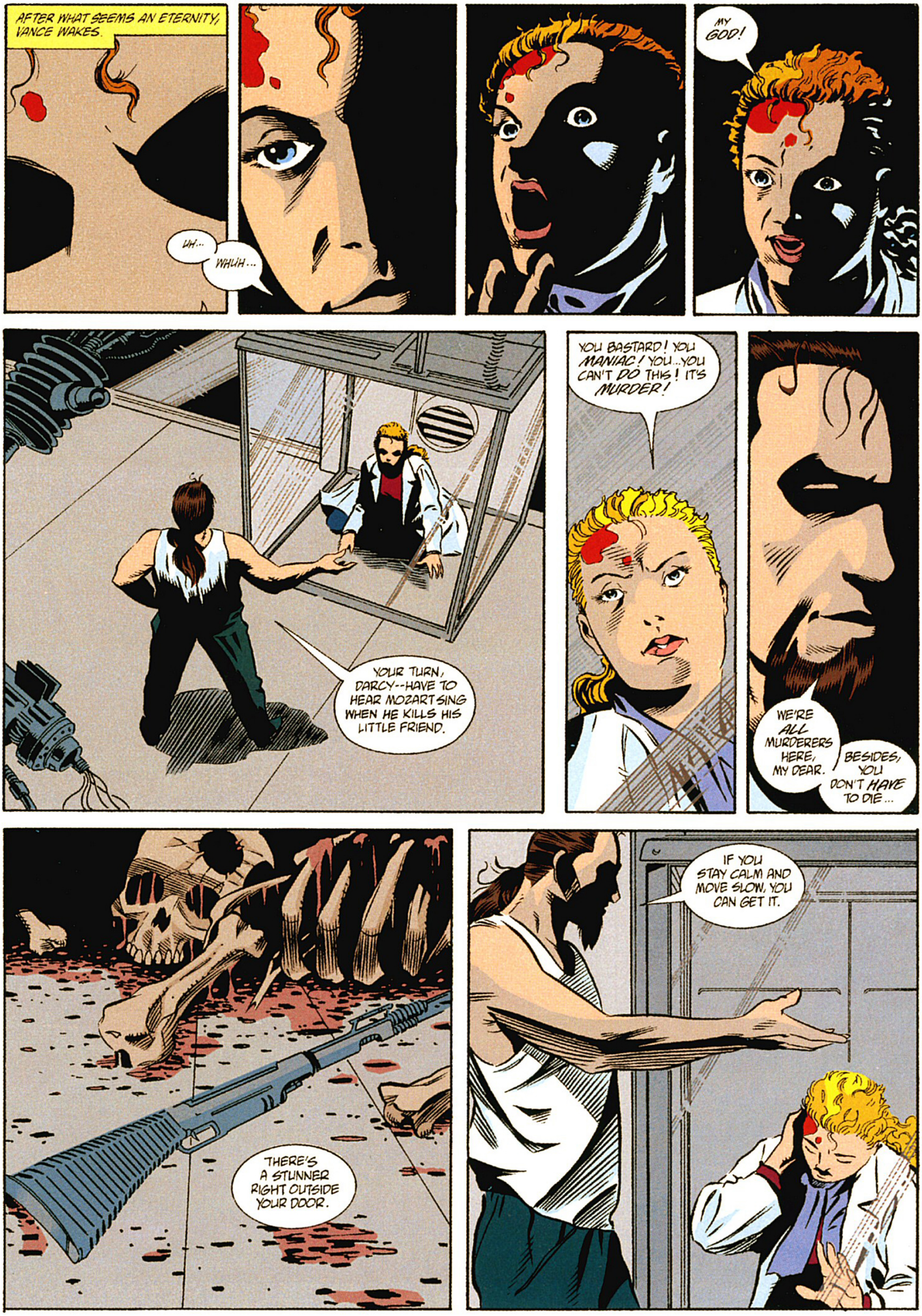

DAMON TAKES MORE JELLY AND WATCHES VANCE.
HE LISTENS TO HER WHISPERS, HIS SENSES HEIGHTENED BY THE JELLY.
I'M SORRY, MOZART, I HAVEN'T BEEN FEEDING YOU LATELY. I HAVEN'T HAD TO, HAVE I?
YOU'VE BEEN GETTING ENOUGH FOOD, THOUGH, EH?
DAMON QUIETLY DISCONNECTS THE SMALLEST OF HIS KEYBOARDS.
THE PLASTIC WAS HARD, BUT, HE HOPED, NOT HARD ENOUGH TO KILL.
HE DIDN'T WANT HER DEAD.

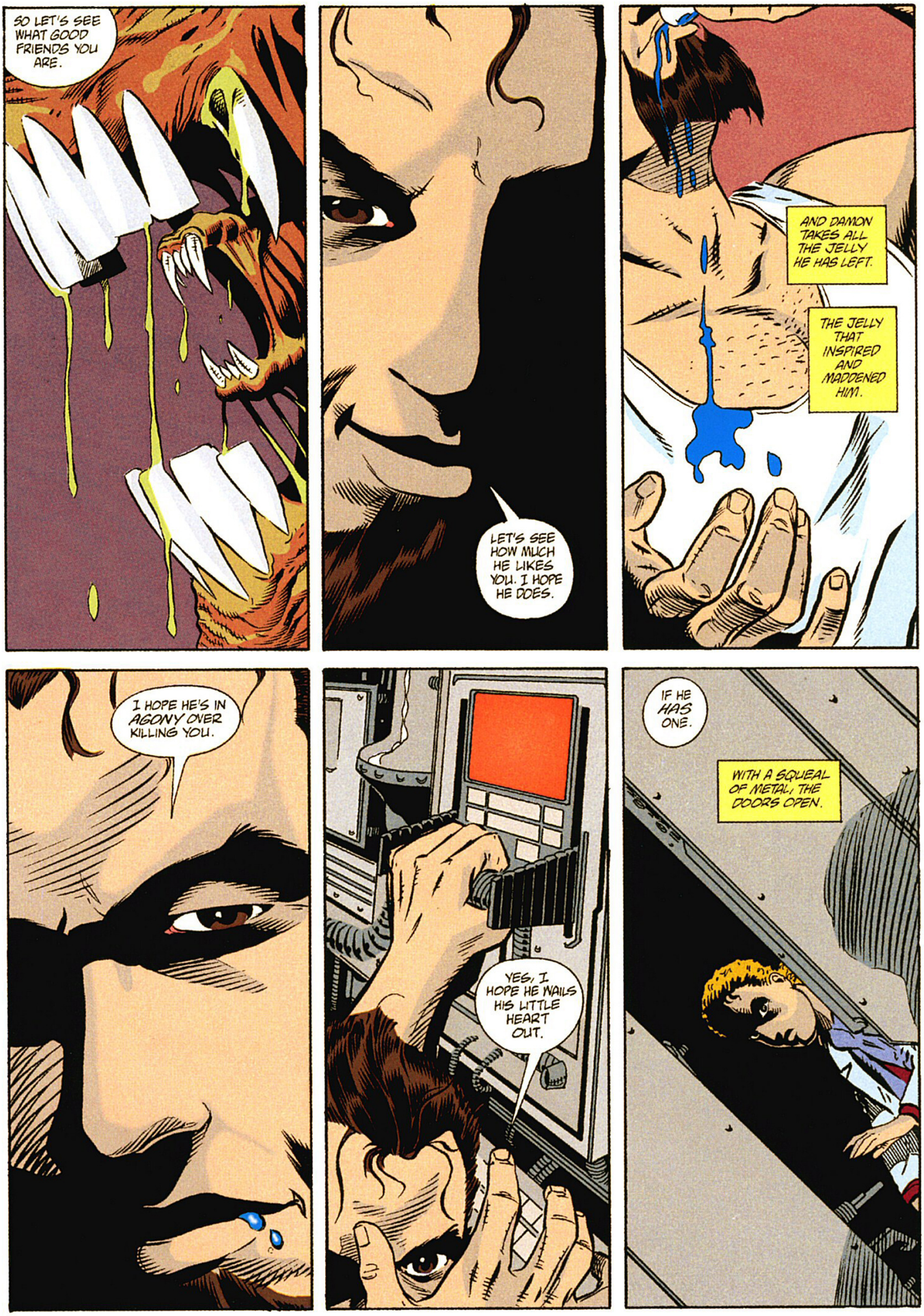
BRANGWEN LIKES ALL KINDS OF MUSIC.
THREE MINUTES TO HELLTONES
PRESLEY HALL
EVEN THE KIND DAMON EDDINGTON REFERS TO AS CRAP.
HE ARRIVES JUST AS THE DROIDS BEGIN TO PLAY.
IT DOESN'T TAKE BRANGWEN LONG TO GET INTO IT.

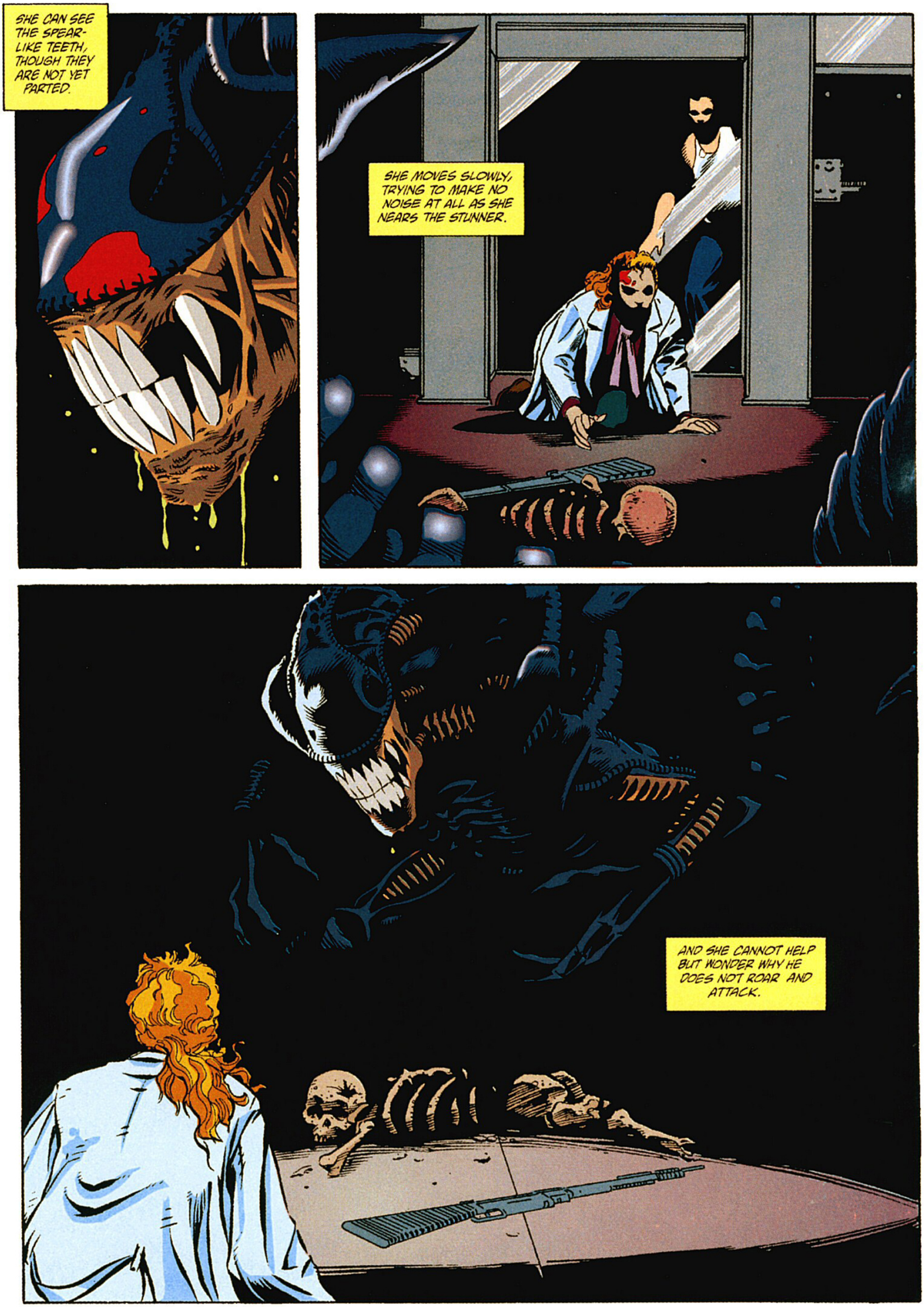
OTHERS GET INTO IT, TOO.
AND SOME USE A LITTLE HELP.
THE SONG IS ABOUT VIOLENCE...
...AND LOVE...
...AND DEATH.


NOW HE WILL HEAR IT-- THE SUBTLETY, THE AMBIVALENCE, THE INTIMACY OF THIS FIGHT. THIS KILL.
IT WILL NOT BE LIKE THE OTHERS. MOZART WILL KILL HER, OF COURSE. BUT IT MAY CAUSE HIM PAIN TO DESTROY A HUMAN HE KNOWS AND HAS DEPENDED ON.
PSYCHIC PAIN. THE LAST EXPRESSION OF EMOTION DAMON NEEDS.
HE WILL TELL BRANGWEN THAT HE WASN'T THERE, THAT VANCE MUST HAVE CARRIED HER COMMUNICATIONS EXPERIMENT TOO FAR.
FEEDER CAGE LOWERING CAUTION
IT WON'T EXPLAIN THE BROKEN KEYBOARD, OR WHY THE CAGE DOOR IS STILL LOCKED. BUT DAMON DOESN'T EVEN THINK OF THAT, OR CARE.

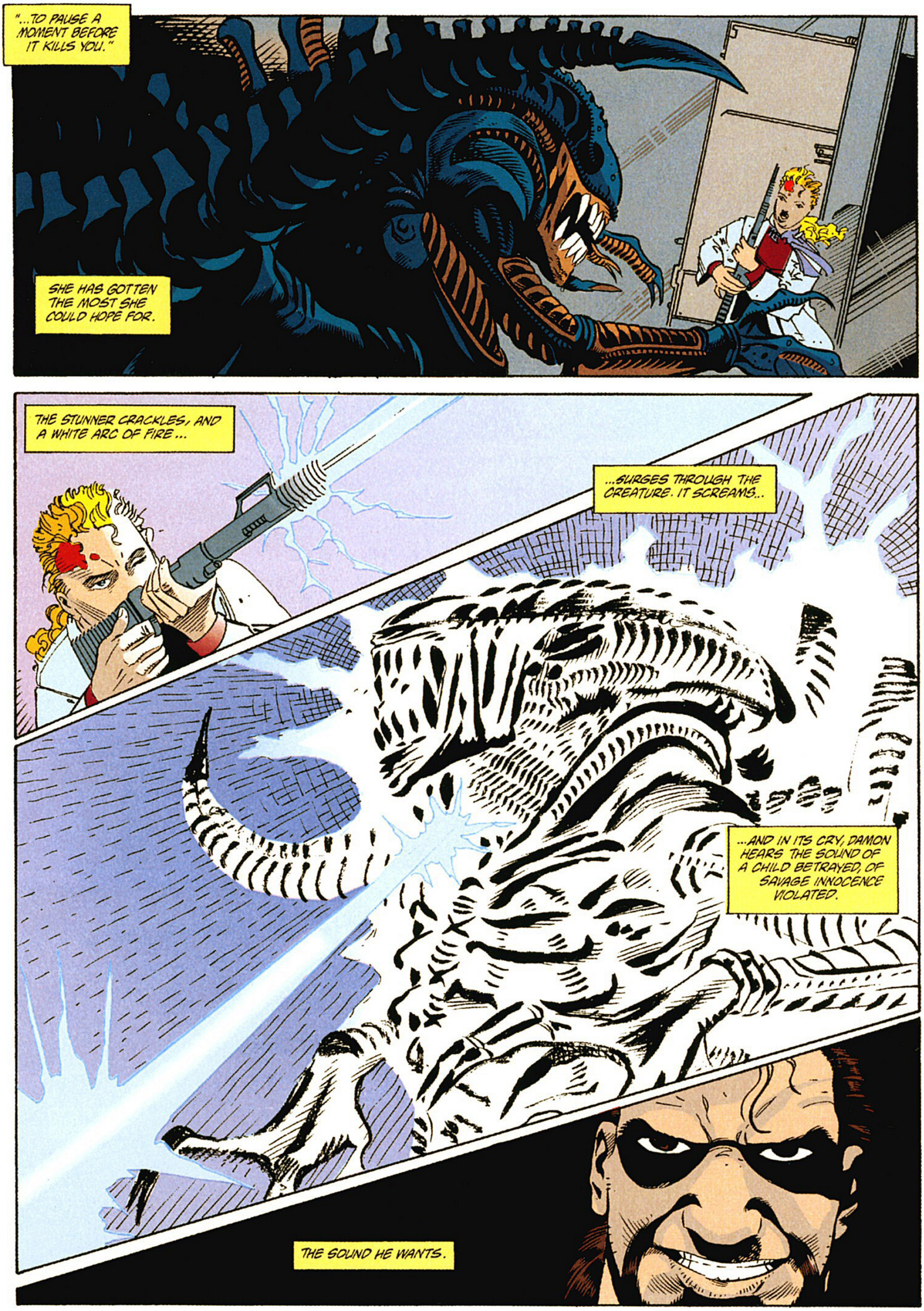
HE IS CRUISING IN OVERDRIVE ON THE JELLY OF THE GODS.
AND MOZART, USING ALL SENSES BUT SIGHT, FOLLOWS HIS EVERY MOVEMENT.
EVERY MICROPHONE, EVERY RECORDING DEVICE GOES ON.
AND MOZART SENSES THE ELECTRICAL PULSE OF THE MICROPHONES OVERHEAD...
...AND KNOWS THAT SOON HE WILL FIGHT. AND FEED.
EVERYTHING GOES ON, VOLUME SLIDES PUSHED HIGH, READY TO CAPTURE ALL, EVEN THE SOUND OF A DROP OF BLOOD, STRIKING THE FLOOR.


AFTER WHAT SEEMS AN ETERNITY, VANCE WAKES.
UH...
WHUH...
MY GOD!
YOUR TURN, DARCY--HAVE TO HEAR MOZART SING WHEN HE KILLS HIS LITTLE FRIEND.
YOU BASTARD! YOU MANIAC! YOU...YOU CAN'T DO THIS! IT'S MURDER!
WE'RE ALL MURDERERS HERE, MY DEAR.
BESIDES, YOU DON'T HAVE TO DIE...
THERE'S A STUNNER RIGHT OUTSIDE YOUR DOOR.
IF YOU STAY CALM AND MOVE SLOW, YOU CAN GET IT.


SO LET'S SEE WHAT GOOD FRIENDS YOU ARE.
LET'S SEE HOW MUCH HE LIKES YOU. I HOPE HE DOES.
AND DAMON TAKES ALL THE JELLY HE HAS LEFT.
THE JELLY THAT INSPIRED AND MADDENED HIM.
I HOPE HE'S IN AGONY OVER KILLING YOU.
YES, I HOPE HE WAILS HIS LITTLE HEART OUT.
IF HE HAS ONE.
WITH A SQUEAL OF METAL, THE DOORS OPEN.


SHE CAN SEE THE SPEAR-LIKE TEETH, THOUGH THEY ARE NOT YET PARTED.
SHE MOVES SLOWLY, TRYING TO MAKE NO NOISE AT ALL AS SHE NEARS THE STUNNER.
AND SHE CANNOT HELP BUT WONDER WHY HE DOES NOT ROAR AND ATTACK.

BUT SHE KNOWS SHE MUST CONCENTRATE ONLY ON GETTING THE WEAPON, NOT ON THE WORKING OF ALIEN MINDS.
AND AT LAST IT IS HERS.
EVER SO CAREFULLY SHE EMBRACES IT...
...AND FLICKS ON THE POWER SWITCH.
SHE IS RELIEVED TO HEAR ITS LOW HUM ANSWER MOZART'S CONTINUOUS HISS...
...AND THANKS A GOD SHE HAS NEVER BEFORE BELIEVED IN FOR THE AUTOMATIC SHUTOFF.
THEN SHE REMEMBERS WHY IT SHUT OFF -- WHEN A DEAD MAN'S HAND FELL FROM THE TRIGGER.
SHE SHUDDERS, THEN REALIZES THAT MOZART HAS NOT YET MOVED.
MAYBE IT HAS ALL BEEN WORTHWHILE. MAYBE IT WON'T HARM HER.
THEN AGAIN...


"...TO PAUSE A MOMENT BEFORE IT KILLS YOU."
SHE HAS GOTTEN THE MOST SHE COULD HOPE FOR.
THE STUNNER CRACKLES, AND A WHITE ARC OF FIRE...
...SURGES THROUGH THE CREATURE. IT SCREAMS...
...AND IN ITS CRY, DAMON HEARS THE SOUND OF A CHILD BETRAYED, OF SAVAGE INNOCENCE VIOLATED.
THE SOUND HE WANTS.

NOW VANCE FIRES TO MOZART'S RIGHT SIDE, DRIVING HIM IN THAT DIRECTION.
SHE CONTINUES TO SEND POUNDING FLAME TO MOZART'S RIGHT, AND KEEPS MOVING TO HER RIGHT...
...EVER CLOSER TO THE PASSAGEWAY THAT SHE HELPED CONSTRUCT.
MOZART'S UNENDING SCREAMS...
...DELIGHT DAMON, CAUSING HIM TO PUSH THE VOLUME HIGHER AND HIGHER...
...UNTIL...

FEEDBACK SQUEALS THROUGH THE ROOM, RESONATING IN EVERY CELL OF HUMAN AND ALIEN...
...CONFUSING AND SLOWING MOZART...
...AND MAKING VANCE GRIT HER TEETH.
BUT SHE TAKES ADVANTAGE OF THE DISTRACTION TO MOVE ANOTHER PRECIOUS METER NEARER THE PASSAGEWAY.
IN ANOTHER MOMENT, MOZART COUNTERS HER MOVE.
AND SINCE SHE CAN COUNT ON NO FURTHER DISTRACTIONS FROM DAMON...
...SHE CREATES A FINAL ONE HERSELF.

DAMON IS EVEN MORE STARTLED THAN MOZART...
...WHO RECOILS, NOT REALIZING THE DEVICE ITSELF IS HARMLESS.
IT GIVES VANCE JUST ENOUGH TIME TO DASH INTO THE PASSAGEWAY.
MOZART IS QUICKLY AFTER HER.
AND DAMON EXULTS IN THE SOUNDS THAT HE WILL SOON HAVE, SINCE VANCE IS NOW DEFENSELESS.
VANCE DIVES FOR A TUNNEL JUST LARGE ENOUGH FOR A HUMAN.
TOO SMALL FOR AN ALIEN.

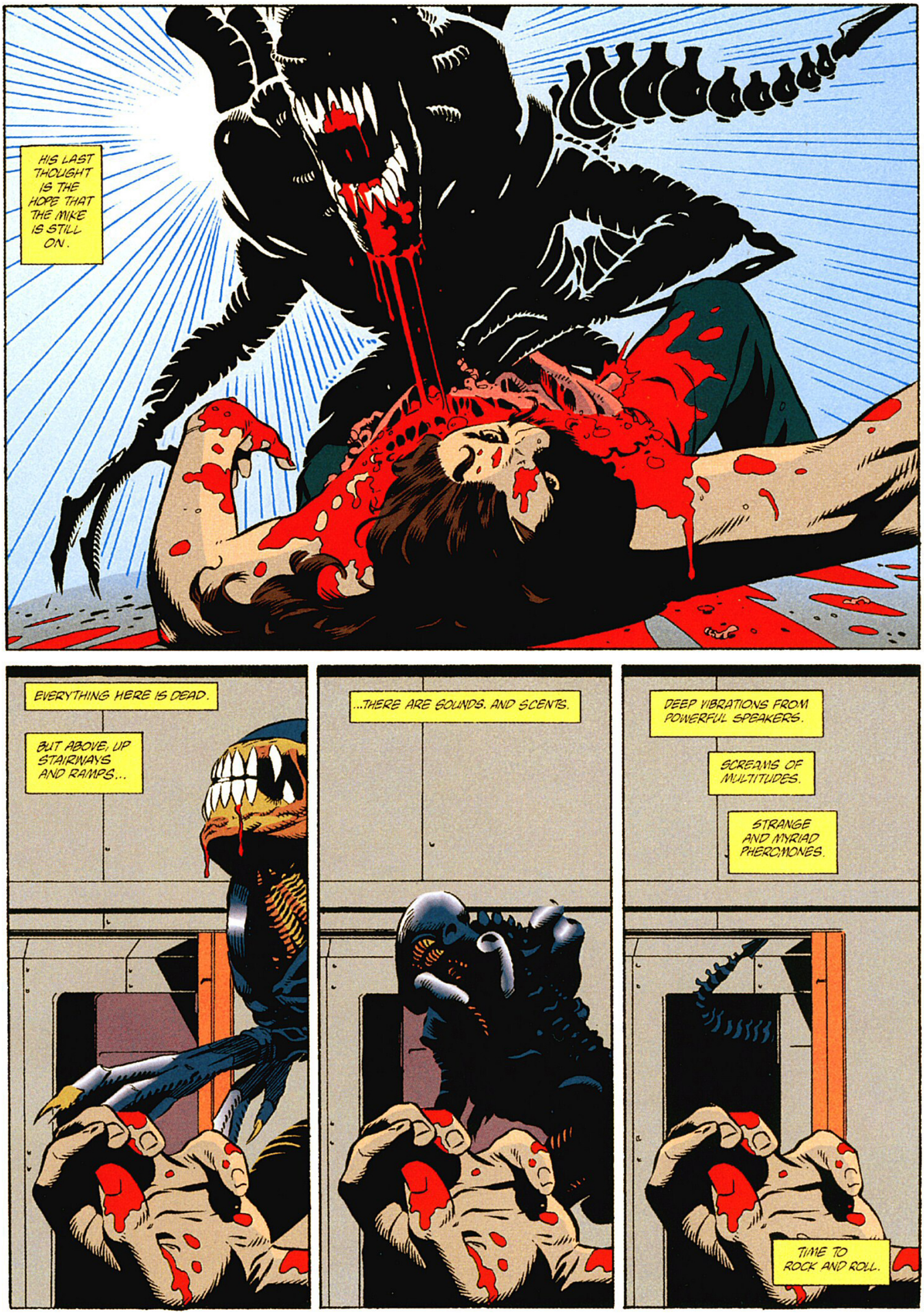
MOZART IS UNABLE TO GRAB HER LEG, BUT IN HIS ATTEMPT...
...SLASHES HER ANKLE TO THE BONE.
STILL, SHE CRAWLS DEEPER INTO THE TUNNEL, BEYOND MOZART'S REACH...
...FUMBLES WITH A RECESSED CATCH...
...AND FALLS THROUGH THE ESCAPE PANEL SHE AND BRANGWEN HAD DESIGNED FOR THE WORKMEN...
...IN CASE MOZART'S SEDATION HAD WORN OFF WHEN THEY WERE INSIDE THE CAGE.
SHE LIES THREE FEET BELOW THE CAGE FLOOR, UNABLE TO MOVE, FEELING THE BLOOD LEAVE HER BODY...
...AND HER CONSCIOUSNESS SLIP AWAY.
DAMON, ANTICIPATING THE SOUNDS HE WILL HEAR AT ANY MOMENT, TURNS ON EVERY SONIC BOOSTER ON THE BOARD...
...SENDING MORE POWER THAN EVER BEFORE THROUGH THE SYSTEM.
DIGITAL INPUT TRACK
TOO MUCH POWER.
AND THE BREAKERS DO WHAT THEY ARE INTENDED TO DO.

NO! NOT NOW!
MOZART SCRABBLES AT THE MOUTH OF THE TUNNEL, REACHING FOR HIS PREY.
DAMON LISTENS, BUT HEARS NOTHING.
PERHAPS THERE IS TIME.
DESPERATELY, HE GRABS A PORTABLE SOUNDISC RECORDER AND A MIKE, TURNS THEM ON...
...AND RUNS TO THE CAGE.
THEN HE REALIZES...
...HE WILL HAVE TO OPEN THE DOOR TO CAPTURE THE MUSIC.

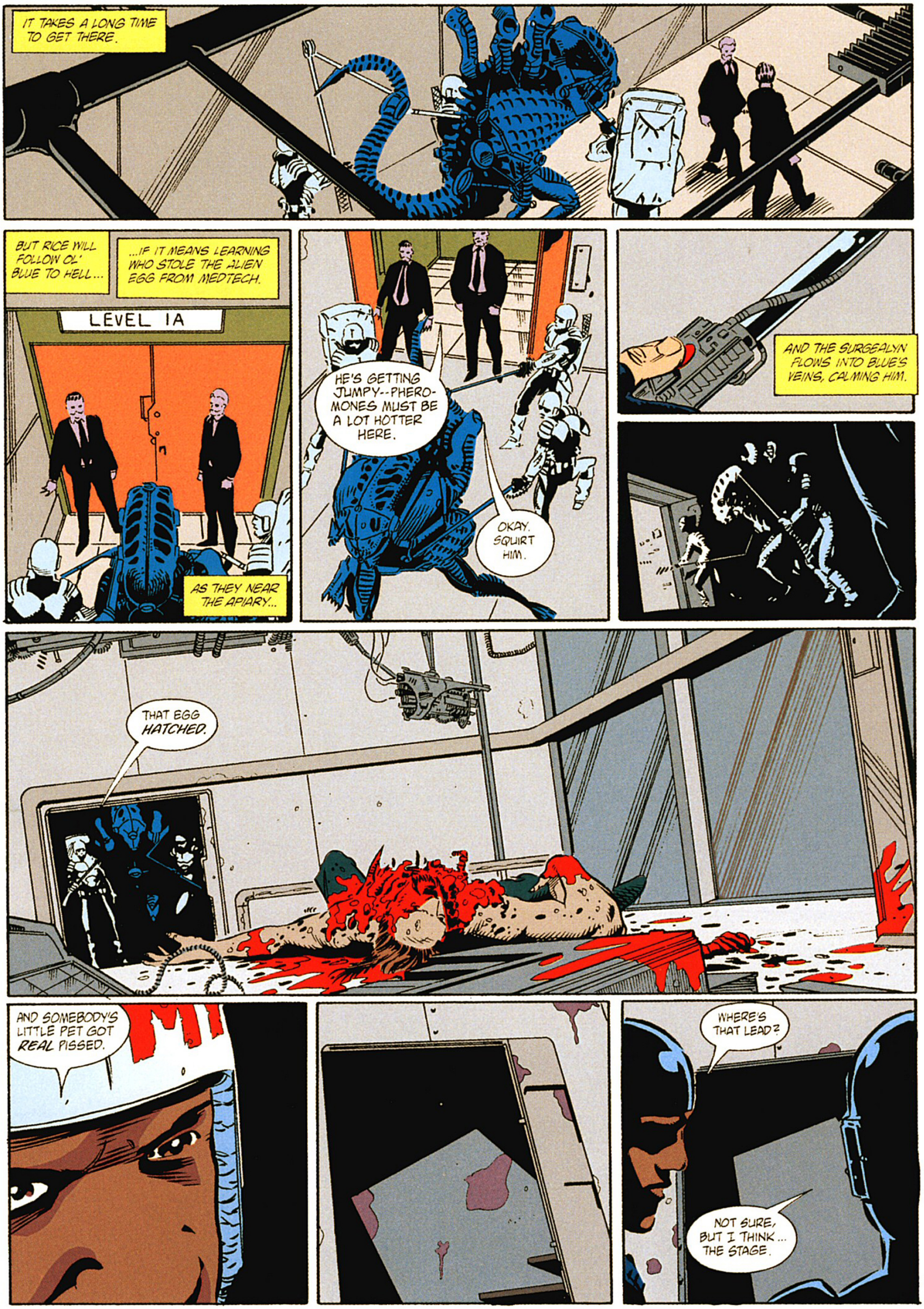
THE PREY IS GONE, OUT OF REACH.
ALL I HAVE TO DO IS JUST OPEN THE DOOR AND STEP IN.
HE'LL BE BUSY WITH HER...IN THE PASSAGE.
WHEN THE MUSIC ENDS, I STEP BACK OUT. HE'LL NEVER EVEN SEE ME.
AND DAMON SOFTLY OPENS THE DOOR.
FEEDER CAGE BREACH -CAUTION-
BUT NOT SOFTLY ENOUGH.

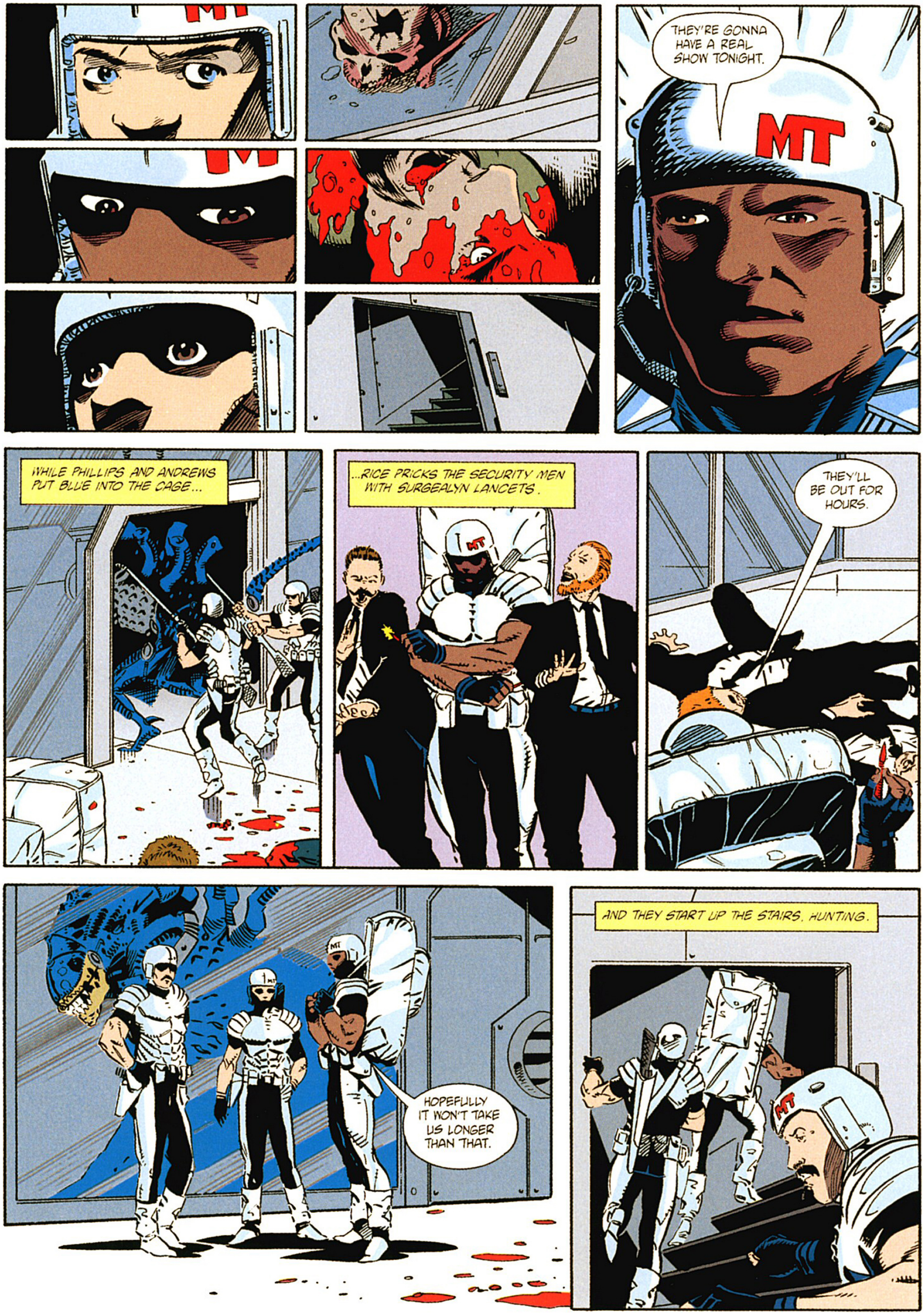
DAMON ENTERS THE CAGE, BRINGING ON HIS BREATH AND SHIRT FRONT...
...THE PHEROMONES OF ANOTHER HIVE.
THE CREATURE MOVES SO FAST THAT DAMON FEELS HE IS RUNNING...
...IN JELLY.

THE HISSING BURNS HIS EARS AND MELTS HIS BRAIN SO THAT HE BARELY FEELS THE CREATURE TOUCH HIM...
...BARELY FEELS IT PICK HIM UP.
BUT THE REST, HE FEELS.
DAMON SCREAMS, DESTROYED BY WHAT HE HAS CREATED AND NURTURED AND STRANGELY LOVED.
TIM AND TIM '93
AND IN HIS EARS, HIS OWN DEATH CRY IS THE MUSIC HE HAS BEEN SEARCHING FOR.

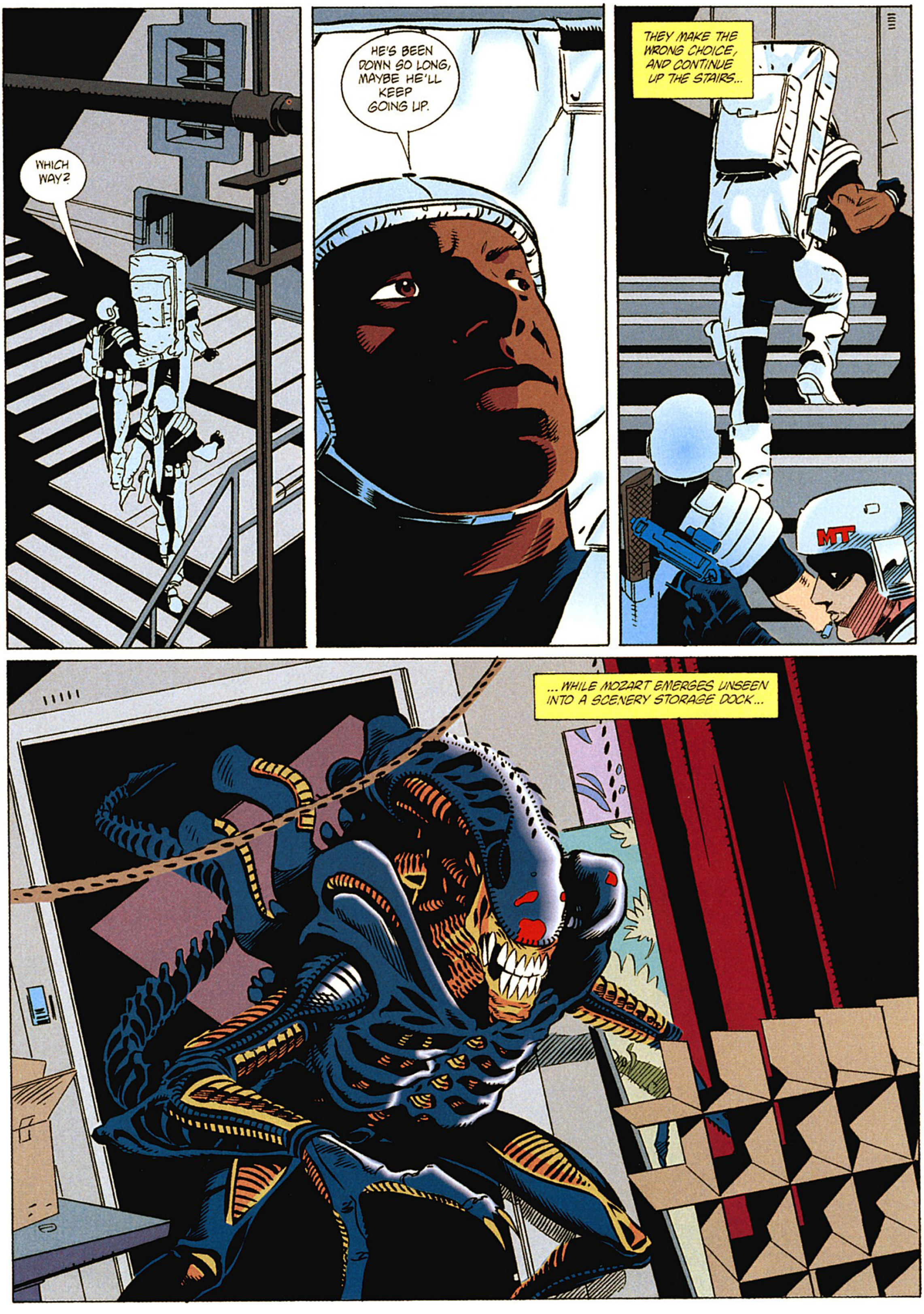

HIS LAST THOUGHT IS THE HOPE THAT THE MIKE IS STILL ON.
EVERYTHING HERE IS DEAD.
BUT ABOVE, UP STAIRWAYS AND RAMPS...
...THERE ARE SOUNDS. AND SCENTS.
DEEP VIBRATIONS FROM POWERFUL SPEAKERS.
SCREAMS OF MULTITUDES.
STRANGE AND MYRIAD PHEROMONES.
TIME TO ROCK AND ROLL.

PRESLEY HALL.
MORTON HERE.
CHIEF, THIS IS HIGGINS. COULD YOU COME TO THE LOADING DOCK?
WHAT FOR?
THERE'S... A SITUATION, SIR.
YOU NEED MORE MEN?
NO, SIR. JUST YOU.
ALL RIGHT, DAMMIT, I'LL BE THERE.
THANK YOU, SIR.
AND THANK *YOU*.
MT
MT
A FEW MINUTES LATER...
OKAY, HIGGINS, WHAT THE HELL DO...
...YOU WANT...
I WANT YOU TO TAKE US WHEREVER THE HELL *HE* WANTS TO GO.

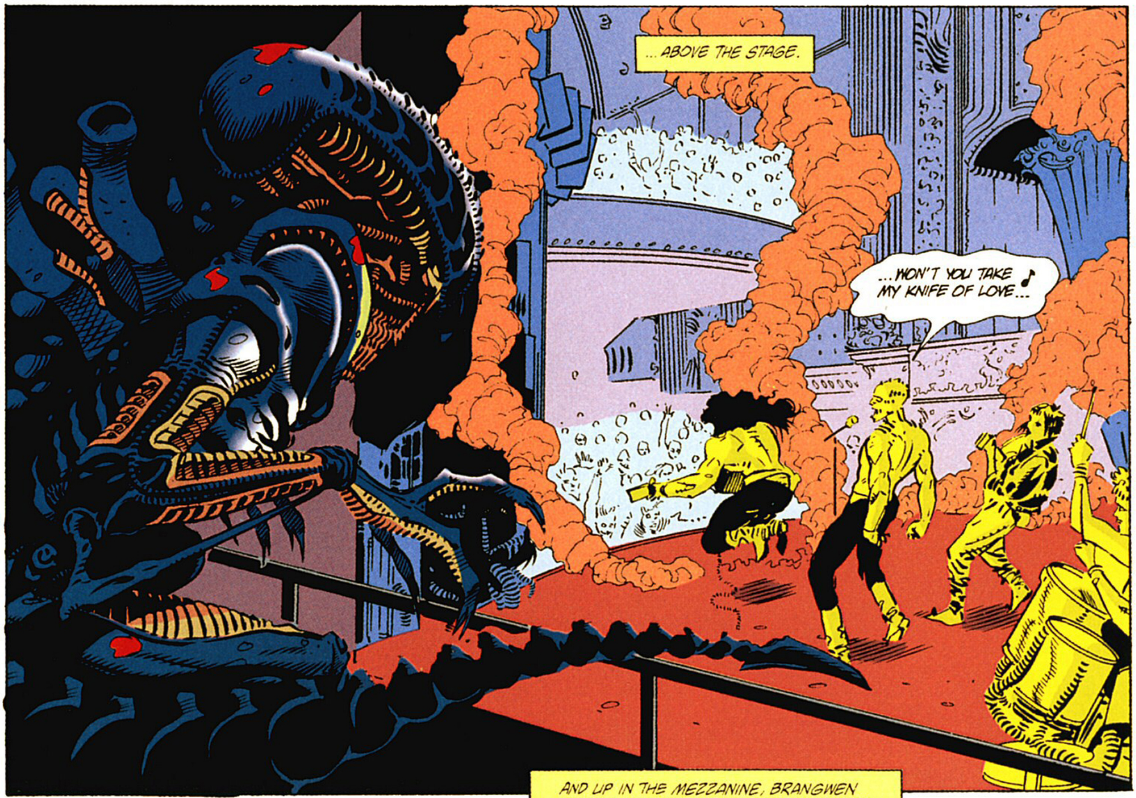

IT TAKES A LONG TIME TO GET THERE.
BUT RICE WILL FOLLOW OL' BLUE TO HELL...
...IF IT MEANS LEARNING WHO STOLE THE ALIEN EGG FROM MEDTECH.
LEVEL 1A
AS THEY NEAR THE APIARY...
HE'S GETTING JUMPY--PHERO-MONES MUST BE A LOT HOTTER HERE.
OKAY. SQUIRT HIM.
AND THE SURGEALYN FLOWS INTO BLUE'S VEINS, CALMING HIM.
THAT EGG HATCHED.
AND SOMEBODY'S LITTLE PET GOT REAL PISSED.
WHERE'S THAT LEAD?
NOT SURE, BUT I THINK... THE STAGE.

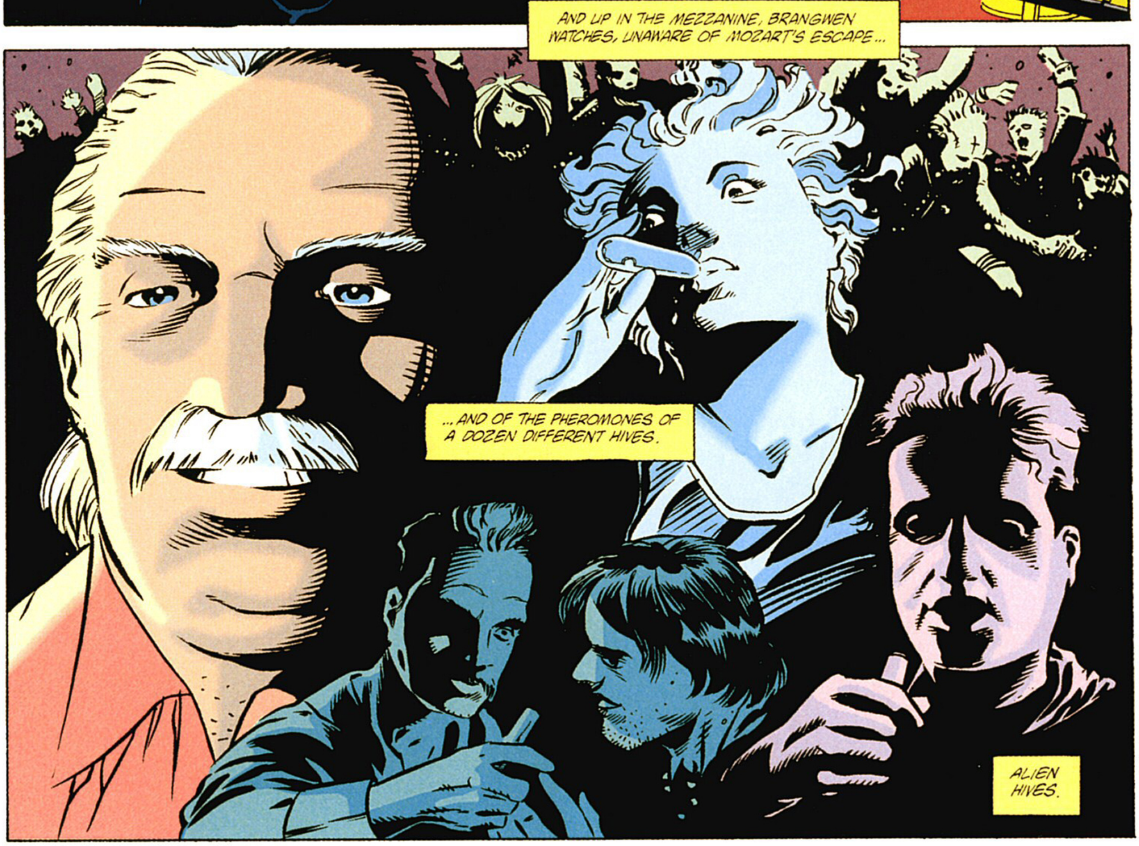


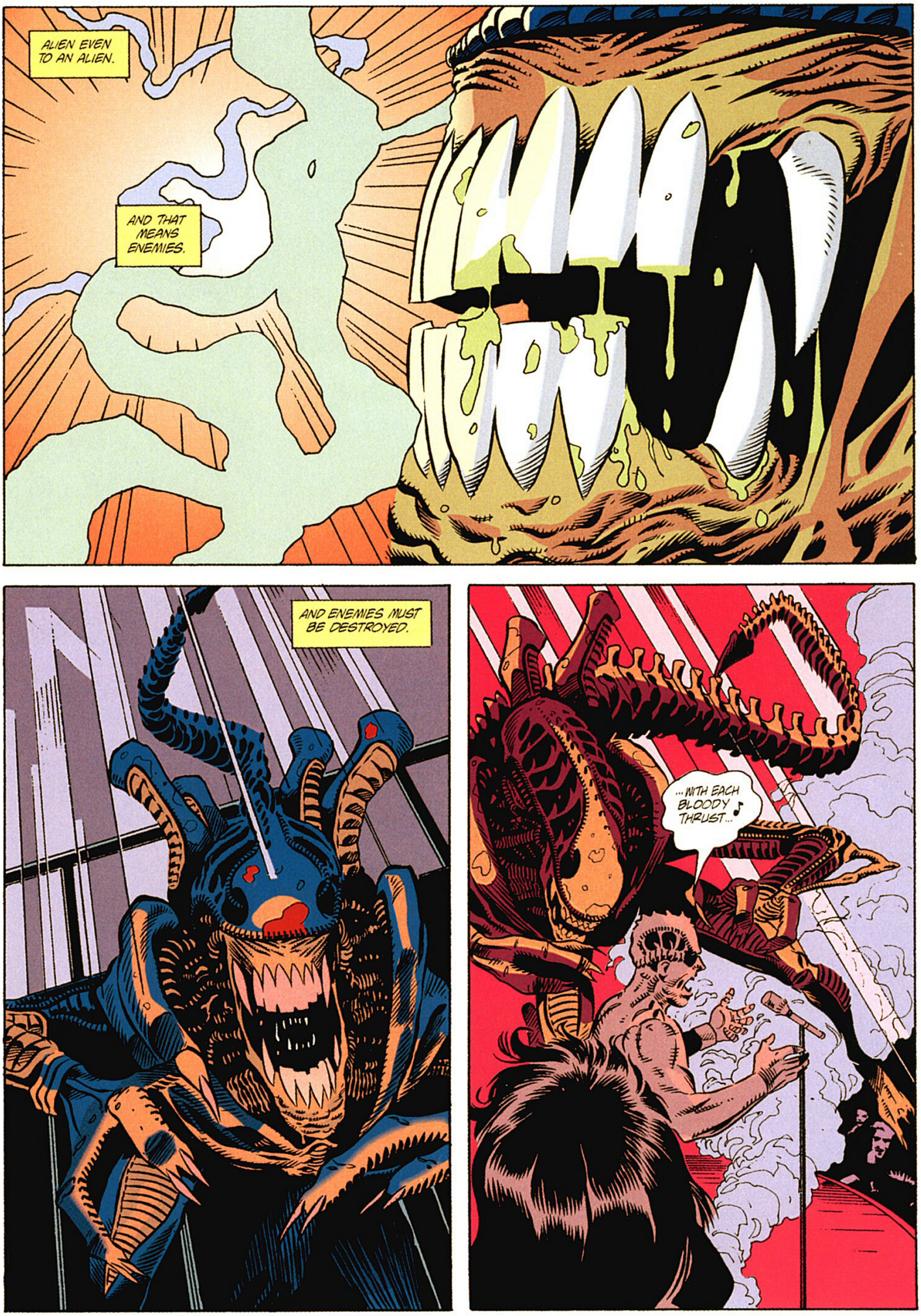
THEY'RE GONNA HAVE A REAL SHOW TONIGHT.
MT
WHILE PHILLIPS AND ANDREWS PUT BLUE INTO THE CAGE...
...RICE PRICKS THE SECURITY MEN WITH SURGEALYN LANCETS.
THEY'LL BE OUT FOR HOURS.
HOPEFULLY IT WON'T TAKE US LONGER THAN THAT.
AND THEY START UP THE STAIRS, HUNTING.

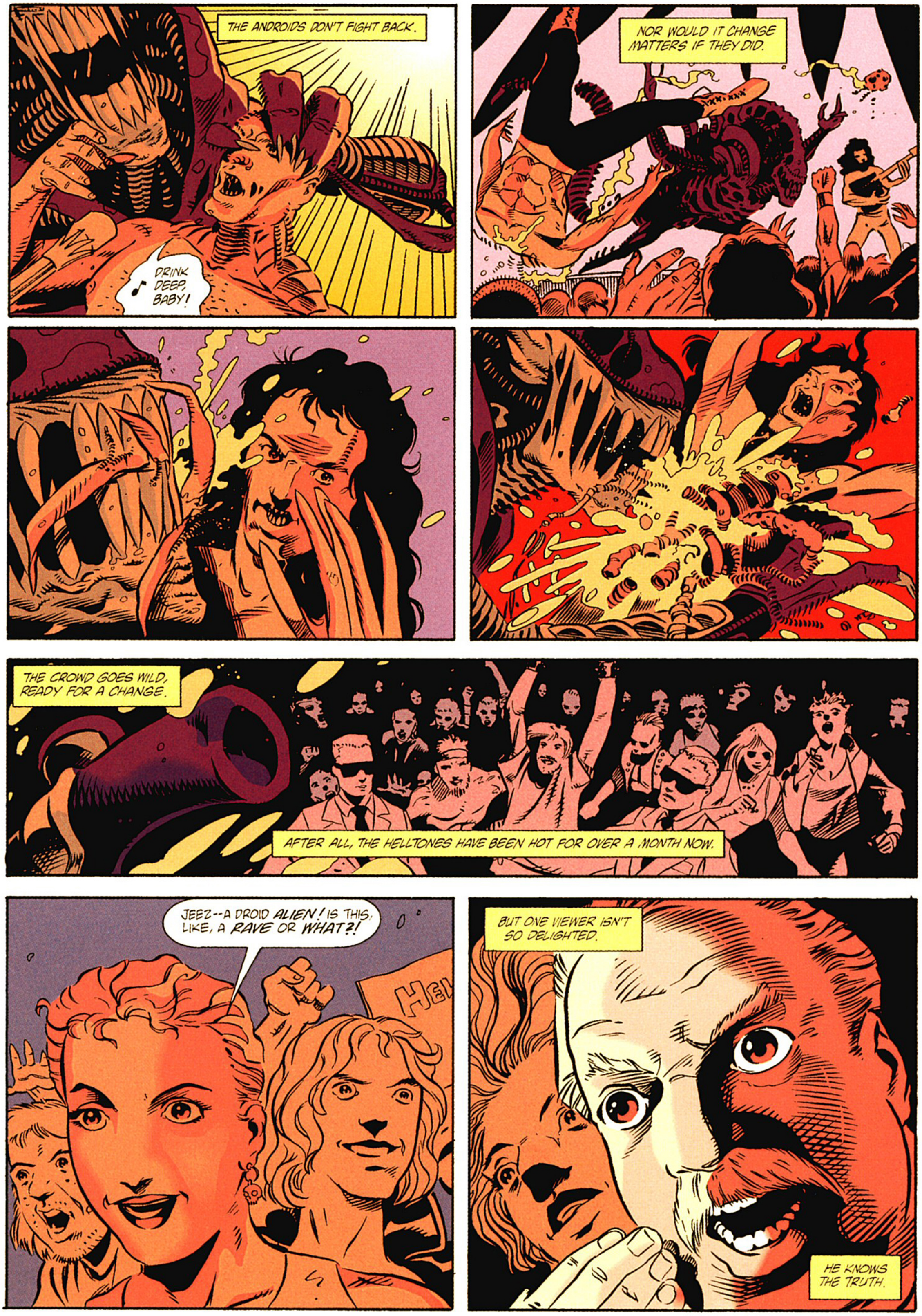


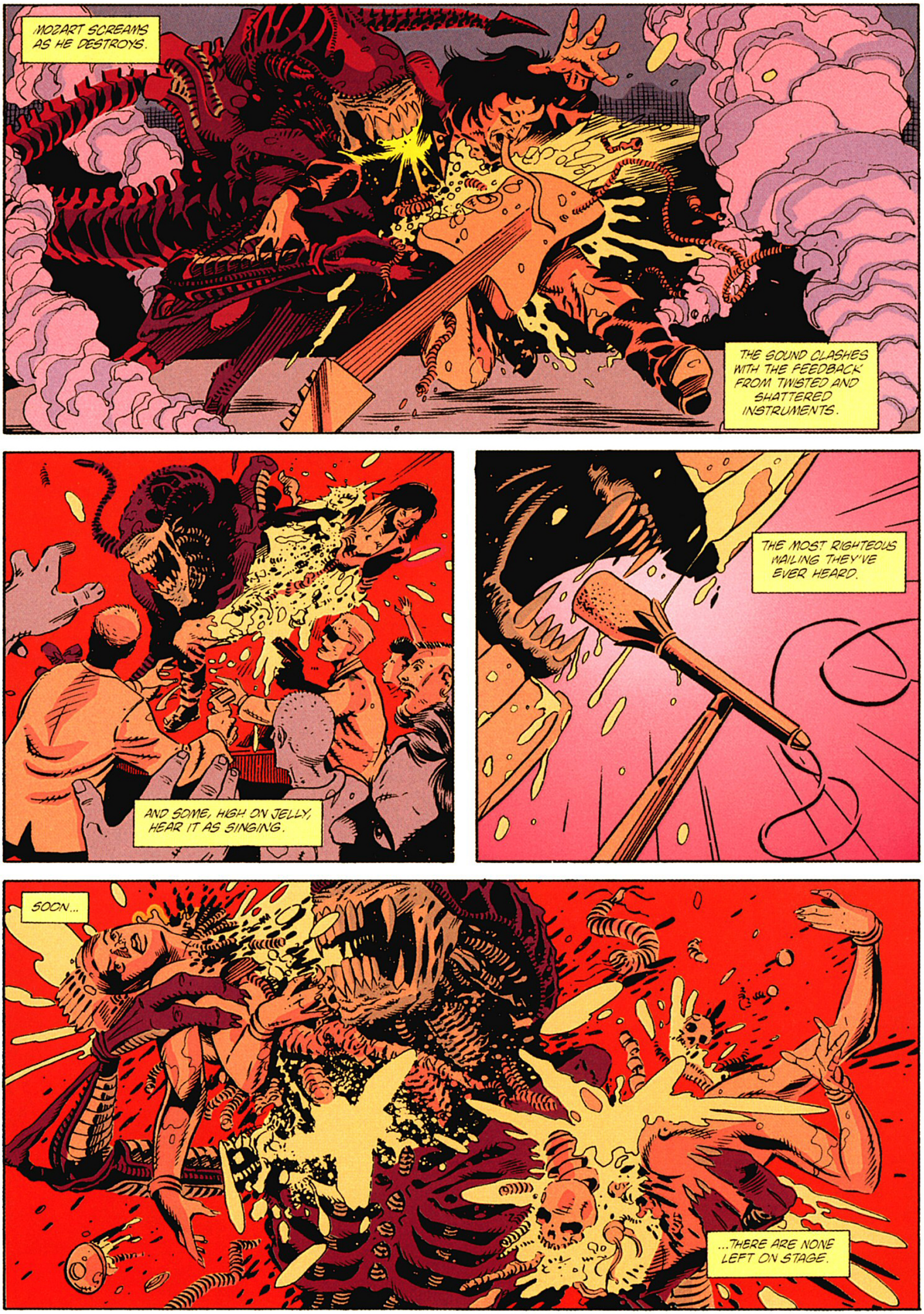
WHICH WAY?
HE'S BEEN DOWN SO LONG, MAYBE HE'LL KEEP GOING UP.
THEY MAKE THE WRONG CHOICE, AND CONTINUE UP THE STAIRS...
MT
...WHILE MOZART EMERGES UNSEEN INTO A SCENERY STORAGE DOCK...


...ABOVE THE STAGE.
...WON'T YOU TAKE MY KNIFE OF LOVE...

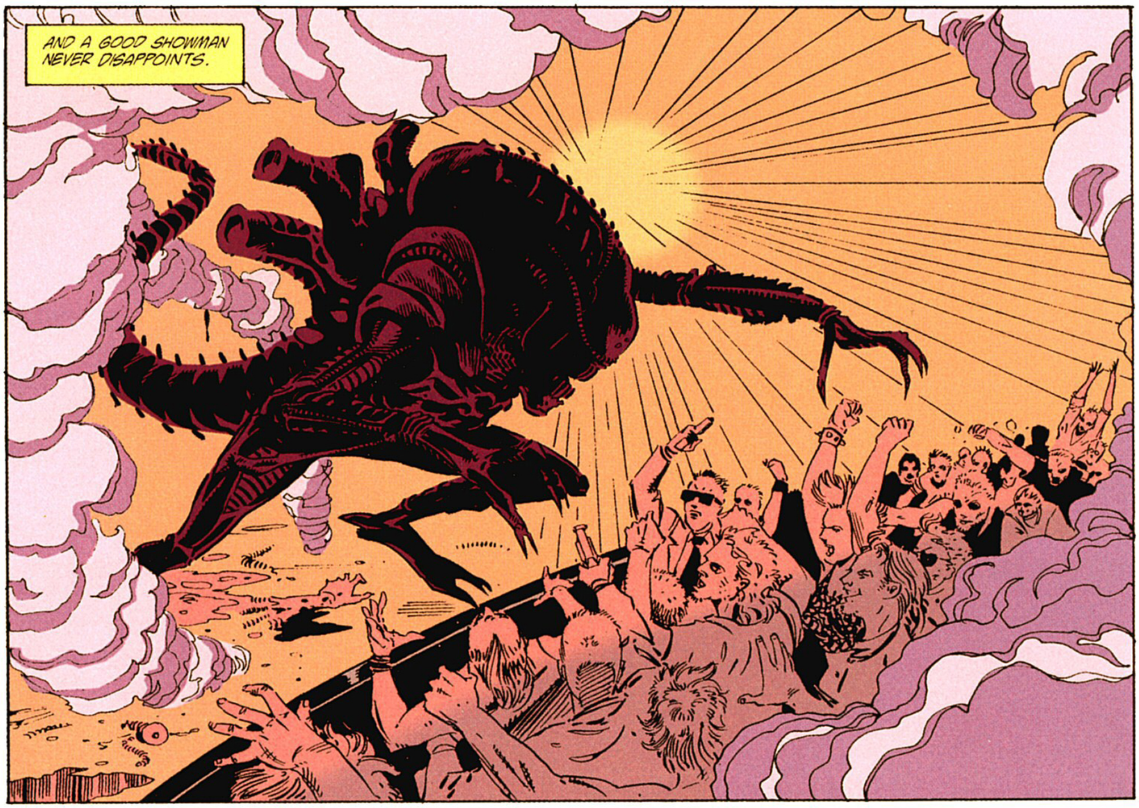

AND UP IN THE MEZZANINE, BRANGWEN WATCHES, UNAWARE OF MOZART'S ESCAPE...
...AND OF THE PHEROMONES OF A DOZEN DIFFERENT HIVES.
ALIEN HIVES.

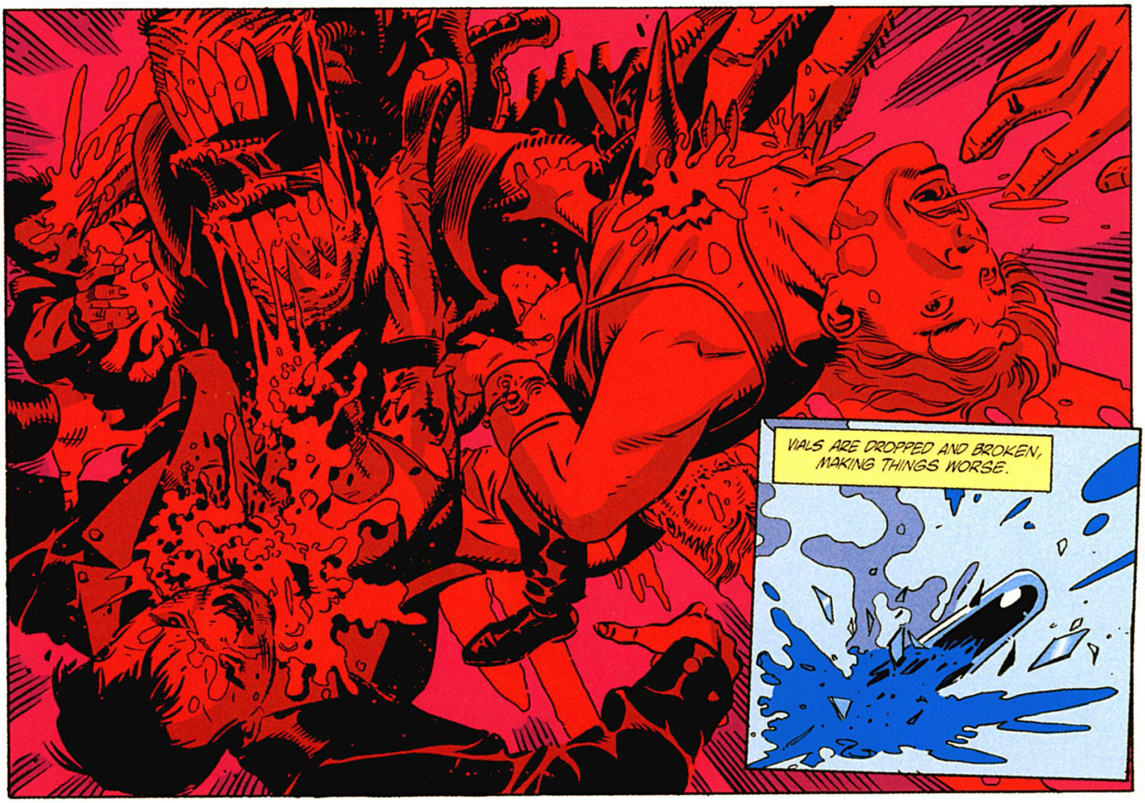

ALIEN EVEN TO AN ALIEN.
AND THAT MEANS ENEMIES.
AND ENEMIES MUST BE DESTROYED.
...WITH EACH BLOODY THRUST...

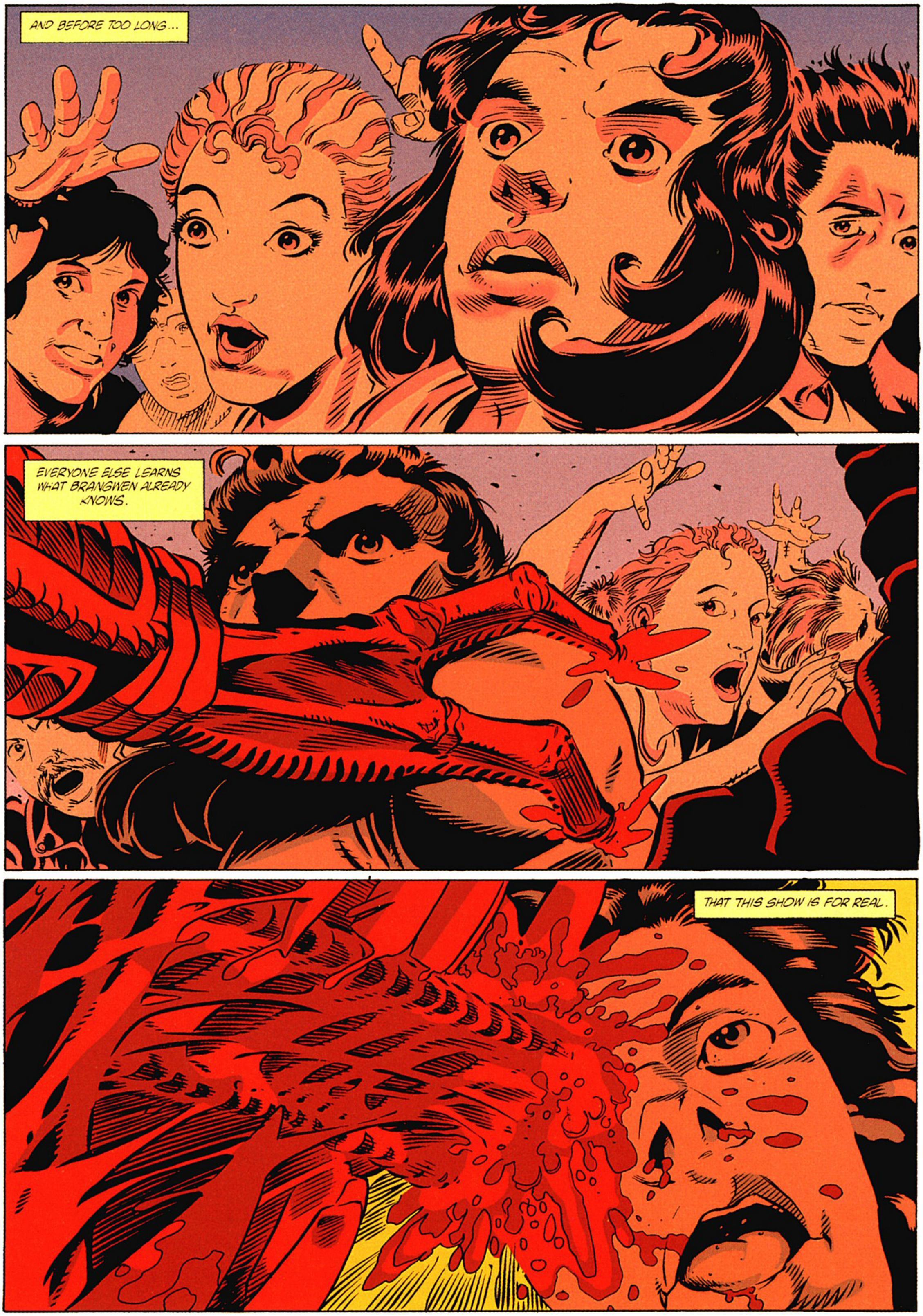

THE ANDROIDS DON'T FIGHT BACK.
DRINK DEEP, BABY!
NOR WOULD IT CHANGE MATTERS IF THEY DID.
THE CROWD GOES WILD, READY FOR A CHANGE.
AFTER ALL, THE HELLTONES HAVE BEEN HOT FOR OVER A MONTH NOW.
JEEZ--A DROID ALIEN! IS THIS, LIKE, A RAVE OR WHAT?!
BUT ONE VIEWER ISN'T SO DELIGHTED.
HE KNOWS THE TRUTH.

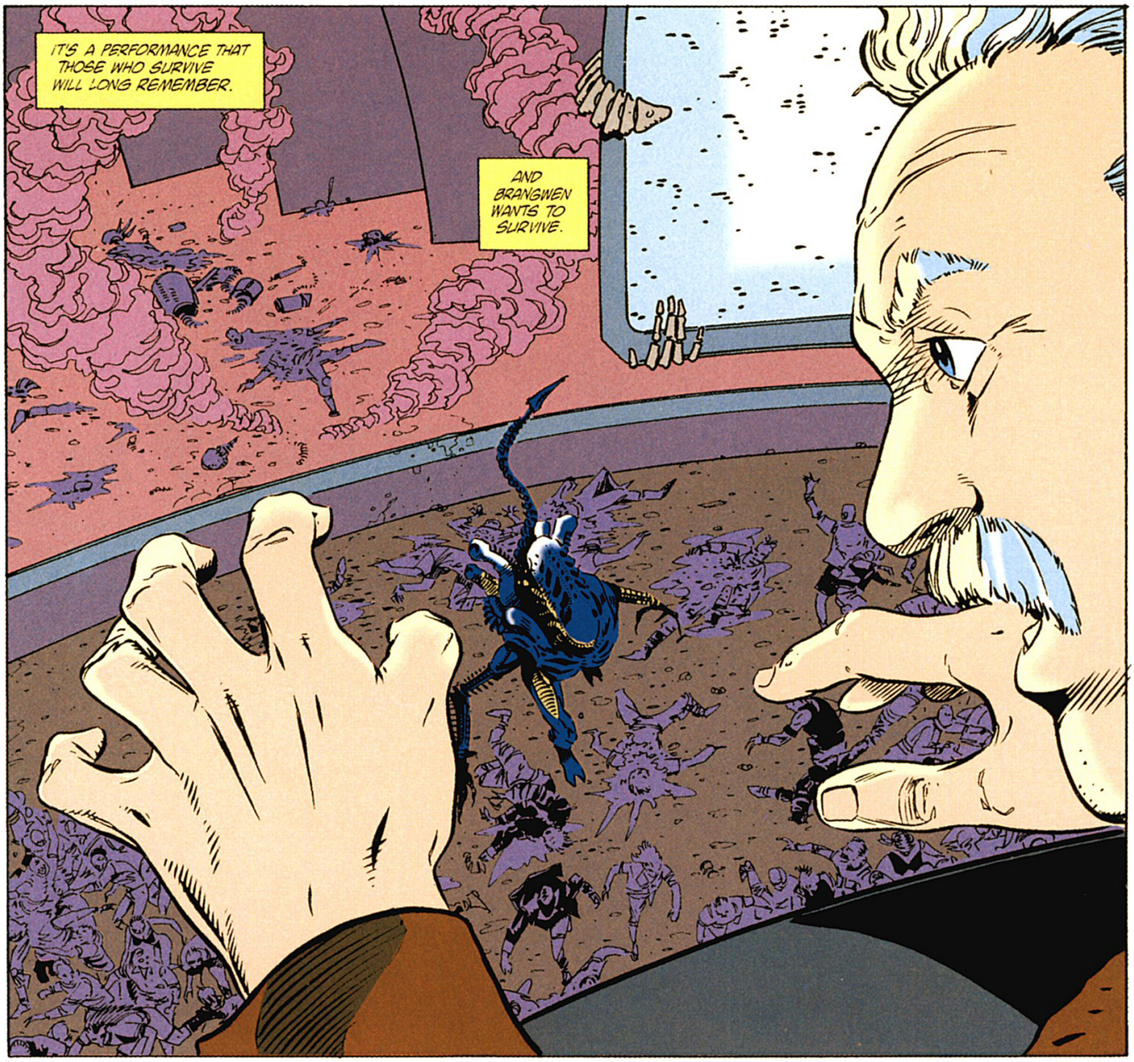

MOZART SCREAMS AS HE DESTROYS.
THE SOUND CLASHES WITH THE FEEDBACK FROM TWISTED AND SHATTERED INSTRUMENTS.
AND SOME, HIGH ON JELLY, HEAR IT AS SINGING.
THE MOST RIGHTEOUS WAILING THEY'VE EVER HEARD.
SOON...
...THERE ARE NONE LEFT ON STAGE.

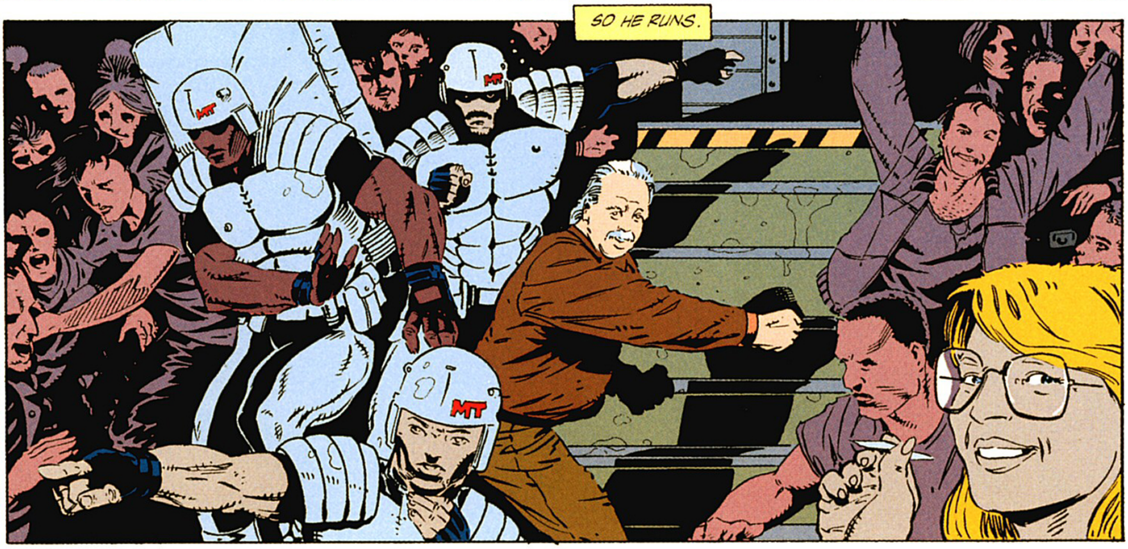
MY KNIFE OF LO-- CHIK
MY KNIFE OF LO-- CHIK
MY KNIFE OF LO--CHIK
MY KNIFE OF LO-- CHIK
MY KNI--
STILL THE CROWD SCREAMS FOR MORE.

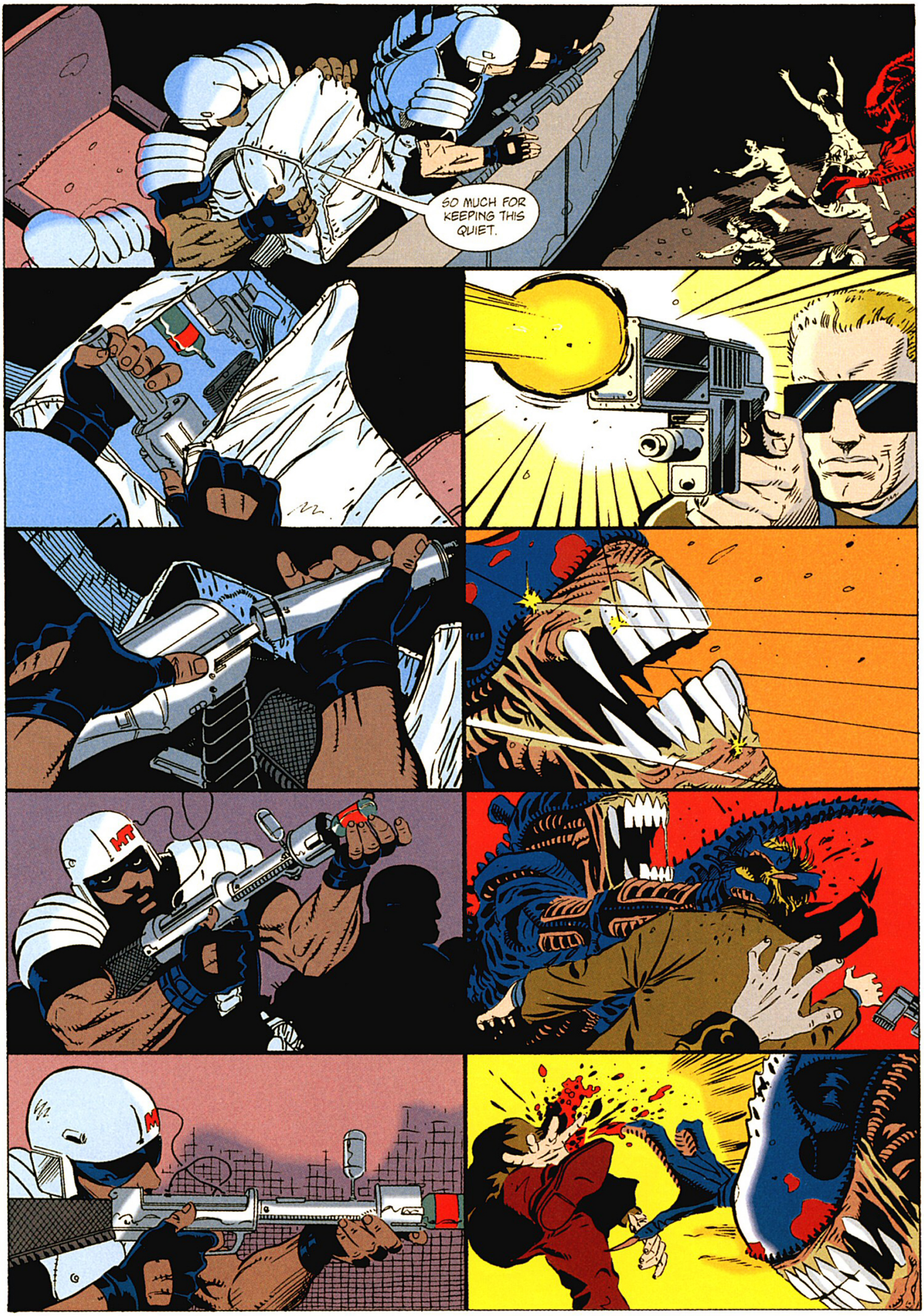

AND A GOOD SHOWMAN
NEVER DISAPPOINTS.

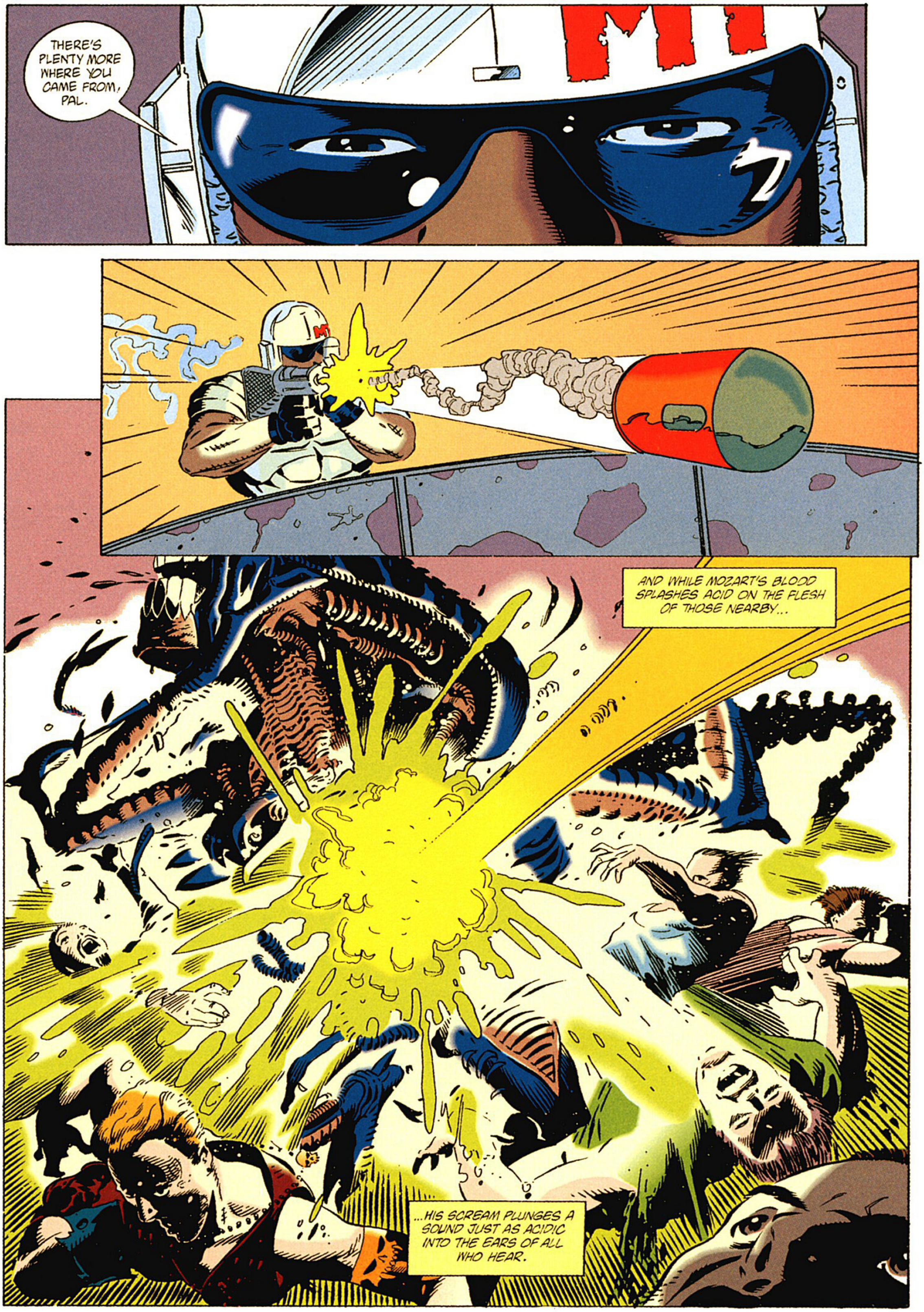

VIALS ARE DROPPED AND BROKEN,
MAKING THINGS WORSE.


AND BEFORE TOO LONG...
EVERYONE ELSE LEARNS WHAT BRANGWEN ALREADY KNOWS.
THAT THIS SHOW IS FOR REAL.


IT'S A PERFORMANCE THAT THOSE WHO SURVIVE WILL LONG REMEMBER.
AND BRANGWEN WANTS TO SURVIVE.

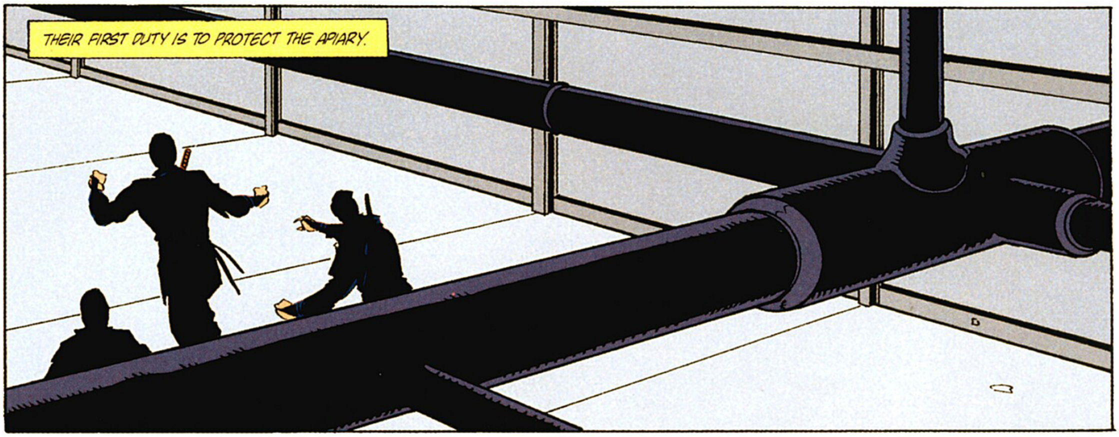

SO HE RUNS.
MT
MT
MT

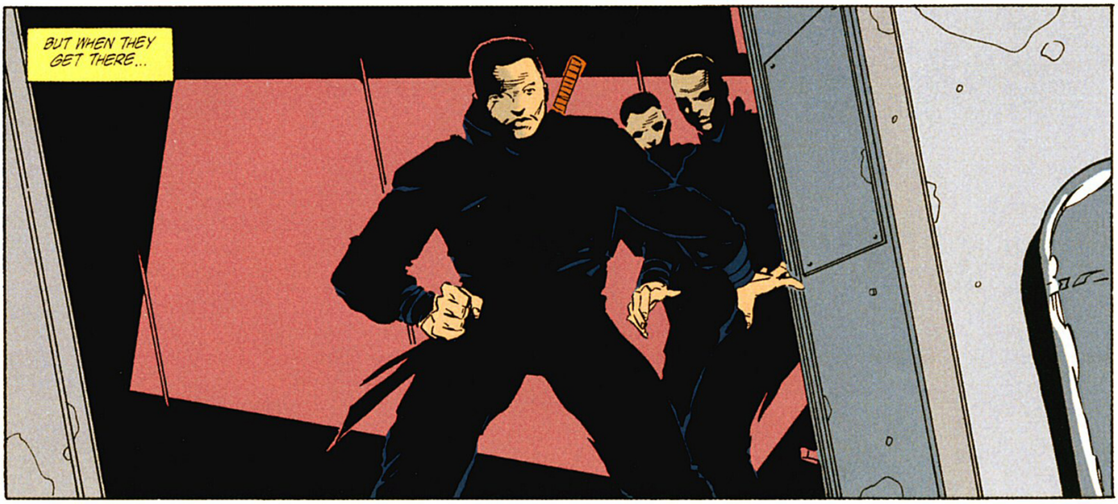

SO MUCH FOR KEEPING THIS QUIET.

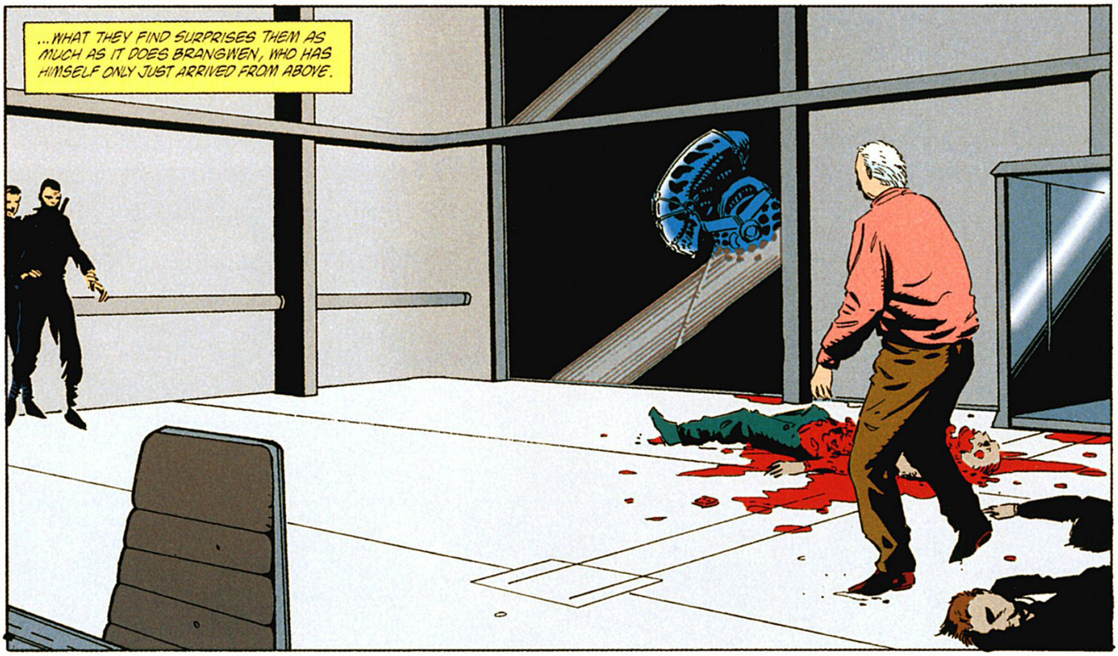

THERE'S PLENTY MORE WHERE YOU CAME FROM, PAL.
AND WHILE MOZART'S BLOOD SPLASHES ACID ON THE FLESH OF THOSE NEARBY...
...HIS SCREAM PLUNGES A SOUND JUST AS ACIDIC INTO THE EARS OF ALL WHO HEAR.

LET'S GO GET BLUE--AND FIND OUT WHAT THE HELL THIS WAS ALL ABOUT.
EXIT

BY NOW, AHIRO HAS BEEN ALERTED...
...AND RUSHES TO PRESLEY HALL WITH TWO OF HIS NINJAS.

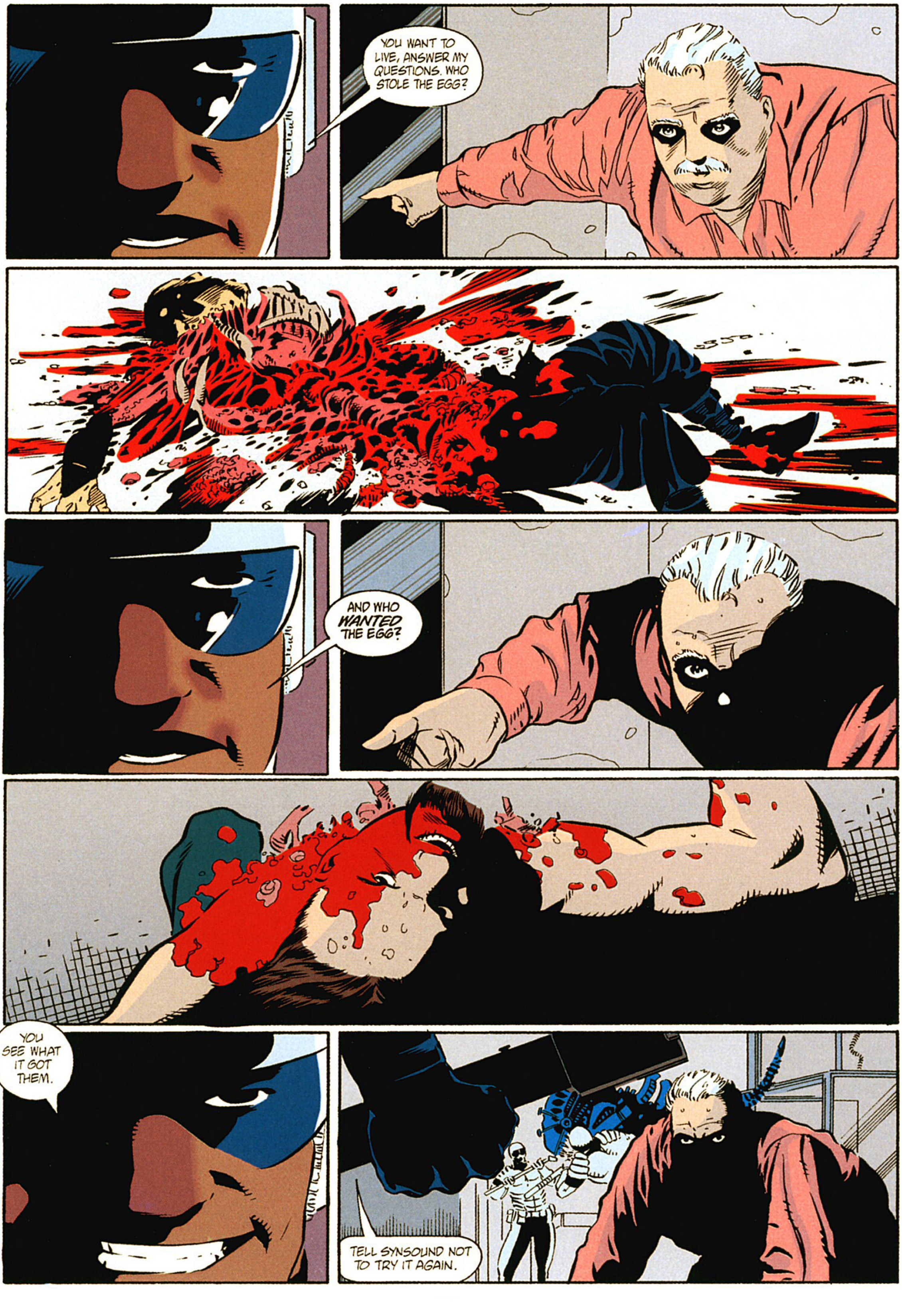

THEIR FIRST DUTY IS TO PROTECT THE APIARY.

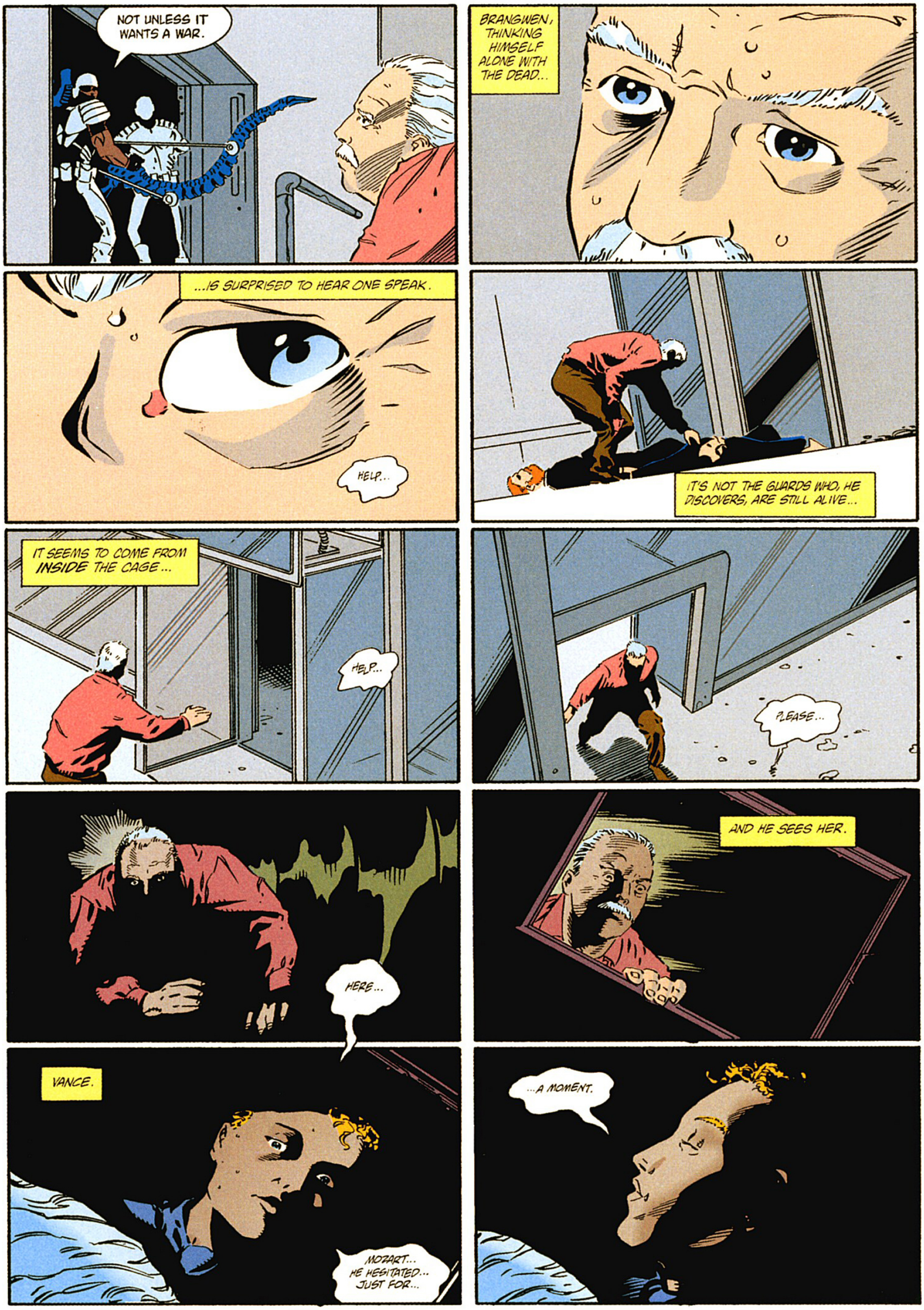

BUT WHEN THEY GET THERE...


...WHAT THEY FIND SURPRISES THEM AS MUCH AS IT DOES BRANGWEN, WHO HAS HIMSELF ONLY JUST ARRIVED FROM ABOVE.

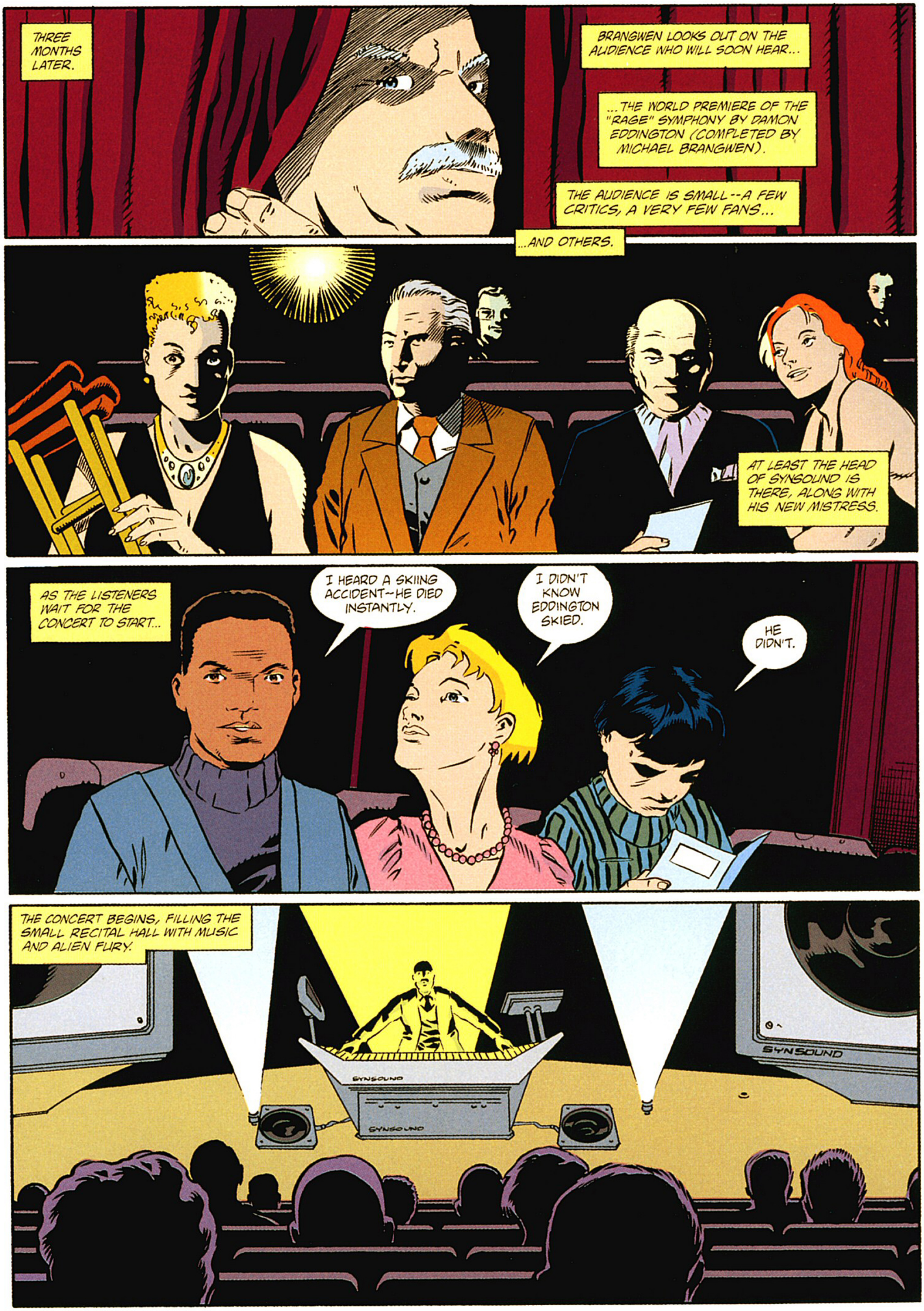
UP ABOVE... MOZART, JUST SLAUGHTERING THEM! I CAME DOWN HERE TO SEE WHAT HAPPENED, AND--
BUT FOOTSTEPS ON THE STAIRS INTERRUPT BRANGWEN.
AND THREE TRAINED GUNS...
...AGAINST THREE TRAINED SWORDS...
...IS NEVER A CONTEST.

ESPECIALLY AT A DISTANCE.
THE ECHOES OF THE FIRING DIE AWAY, UNTIL ALL THAT IS HEARD IS THE DRIPPING OF BLOOD AND THE HISSING OF THE ALIEN.


YOU WANT TO LIVE, ANSWER MY QUESTIONS. WHO STOLE THE EGG?
AND WHO *WANTED* THE EGG?
YOU SEE WHAT IT GOT THEM.
TELL SYNSOUND NOT TO TRY IT AGAIN.


NOT UNLESS IT WANTS A WAR.
BRANGWEN, THINKING HIMSELF ALONE WITH THE DEAD...
...IS SURPRISED TO HEAR ONE SPEAK.
HELP...
IT'S NOT THE GUARDS WHO, HE DISCOVERS, ARE STILL ALIVE...
IT SEEMS TO COME FROM INSIDE THE CAGE...
HELP...
PLEASE...
HERE...
AND HE SEES HER.
VANCE.
MOZART... HE HESITATED... JUST FOR...
...A MOMENT.

...LAST NIGHT, WHEN THE ALIEN KILLED SEVENTEEN PEOPLE AND INJURED ANOTHER THIRTY-TWO BEFORE IT WAS DESTROYED...
"...BY THIS UNIDENTIFIED MAN, ASSUMED TO BE EITHER AN ILLICIT WEAPONS OR A DRUG DEALER."
"THE CREATURE IS THOUGHT TO BE ONE OF AN INFESTATION FOUND IN THE CITY SEWER SYSTEM. ALL SEVEN ALIENS DISCOVERED THERE WERE DESTROYED EARLIER TODAY."
AUTHORITIES HAVE PROMISED THAT THERE WILL BE NO FURTHER INCIDENTS.
THE RIGHT PEOPLE HAD BEEN REACHED...
...THE PROPER PAYMENTS MADE.


THREE MONTHS LATER.
BRANGWEN LOOKS OUT ON THE AUDIENCE WHO WILL SOON HEAR...
...THE WORLD PREMIERE OF THE "RAGE" SYMPHONY BY DAMON EDDINGTON (COMPLETED BY MICHAEL BRANGWEN).
THE AUDIENCE IS SMALL--A FEW CRITICS, A VERY FEW FANS...
...AND OTHERS.
AT LEAST THE HEAD OF SYNSOUND IS THERE, ALONG WITH HIS NEW MISTRESS.
AS THE LISTENERS WAIT FOR THE CONCERT TO START...
I HEARD A SKIING ACCIDENT--HE DIED INSTANTLY.
I DIDN'T KNOW EDDINGTON SKIED.
HE DIDN'T.
THE CONCERT BEGINS, FILLING THE SMALL RECITAL HALL WITH MUSIC AND ALIEN FURY.
SYNSOUND
SYNSOUND
SYNSOUND

THE REVIEWS WOULD NOT BE KIND.
THAT SAME EVENING, TWO BLOCKS AWAY IN PRESLEY HALL...
MY KNIFE OF...
LO...
THE PRESLEY HALL SLAUGHTER IS BEING RECREATED WHERE IT HAPPENED, ENDANGERING ONLY ANDROIDS.
BOTH THOSE ON STAGE...
...AND THOSE IN THE AUDIENCE.
EVERYONE ADORES IT. EVEN THOSE WHO SURVIVED THAT NIGHT.

BUT THE BEST MOMENT OF ALL IS WHEN THE GRENADE SPLITS THE ALIEN'S CARAPACE.
NO BLOOD, NO ACID.
ONLY THE SOUND RECORDED ON THAT NIGHT.
THE DEATH SCREAM.
THE SCREAM DAMON EDDINGTON HAD HUNGERED FOR, BUT NEVER HEARD.
THE SCREAM THAT SOARS UP AND OVER THE ROARING MOB...
...UNTIL THEIR OWN SCREAMS OF DELIGHT...
...SWALLOW IT UP.

MUSIC OF THE SPEARS
TIM © BRAD-STREET 1994
burwell '94

script
CHET WILLIAMSON

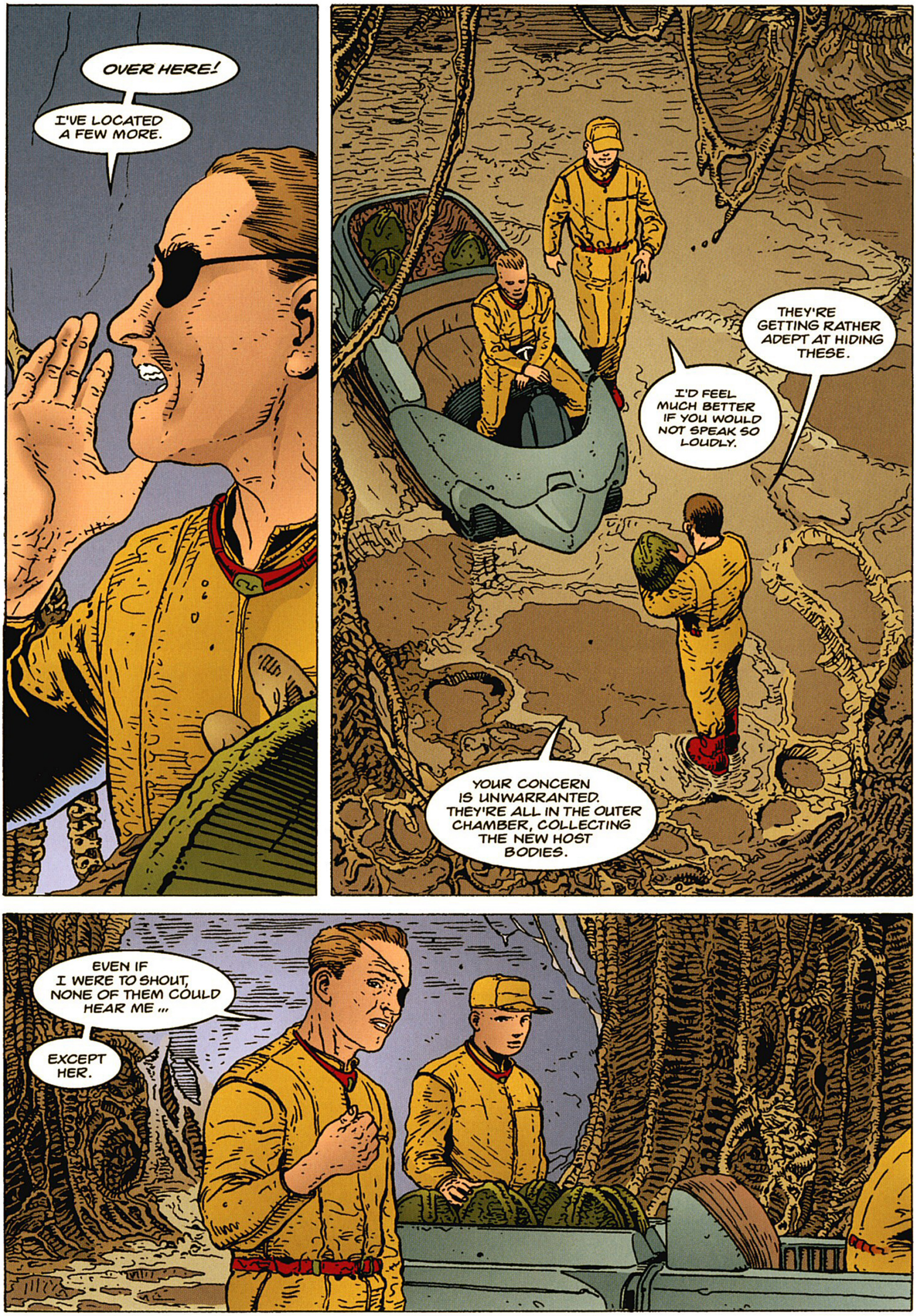
pencils
TIM HAMILTON

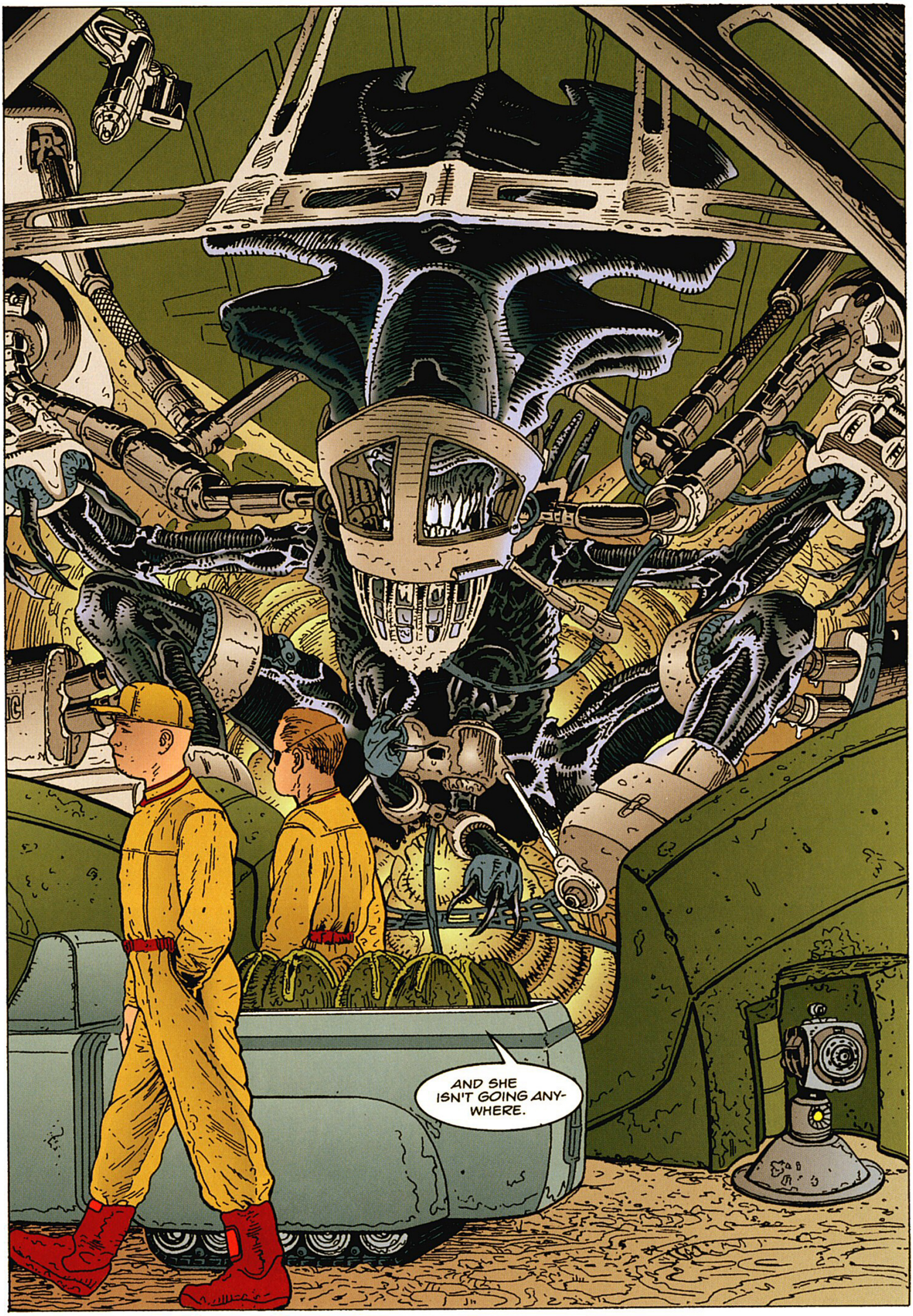
inks
TIMOTHY BRADSTREET

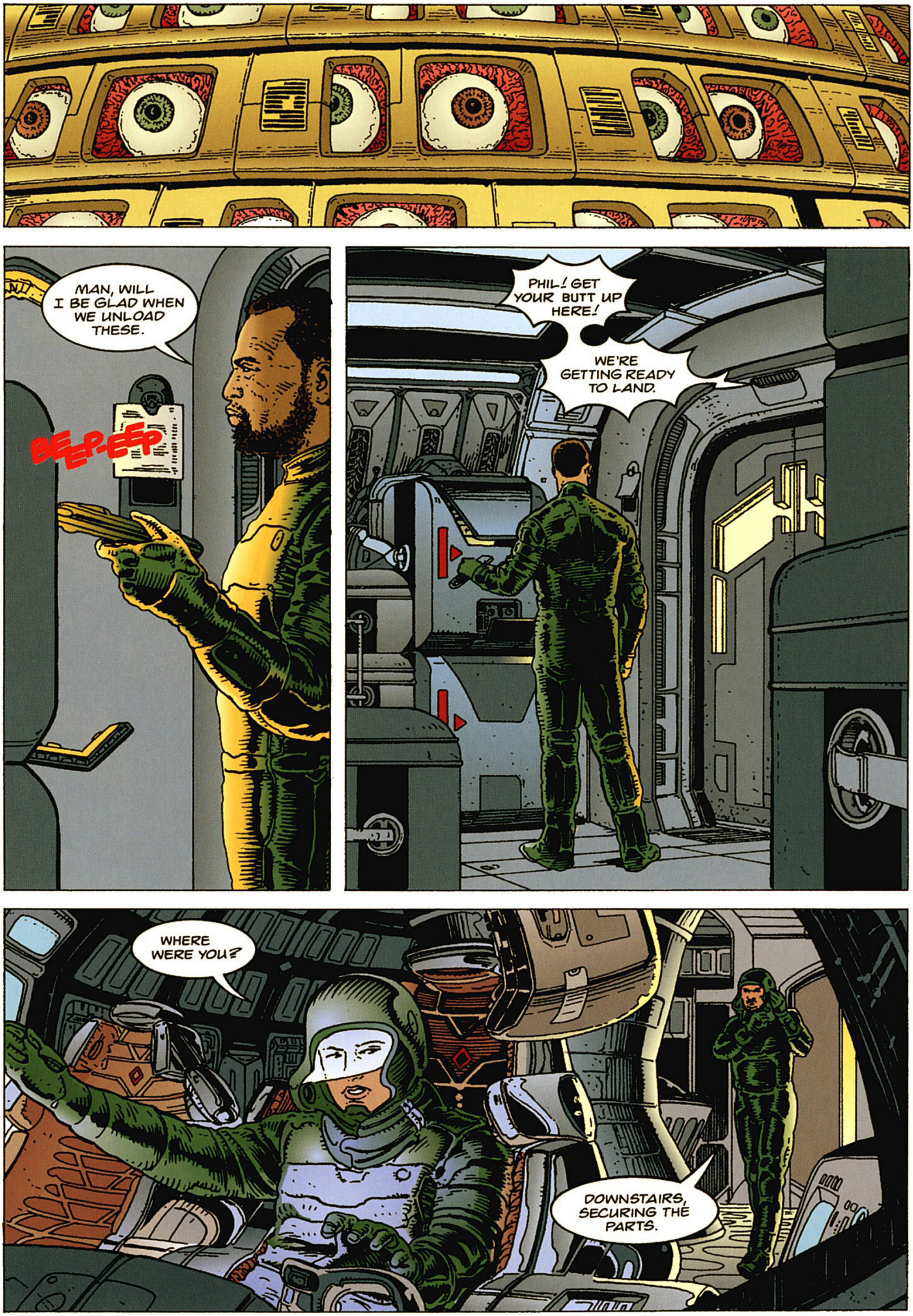
colors
MATT WEBB

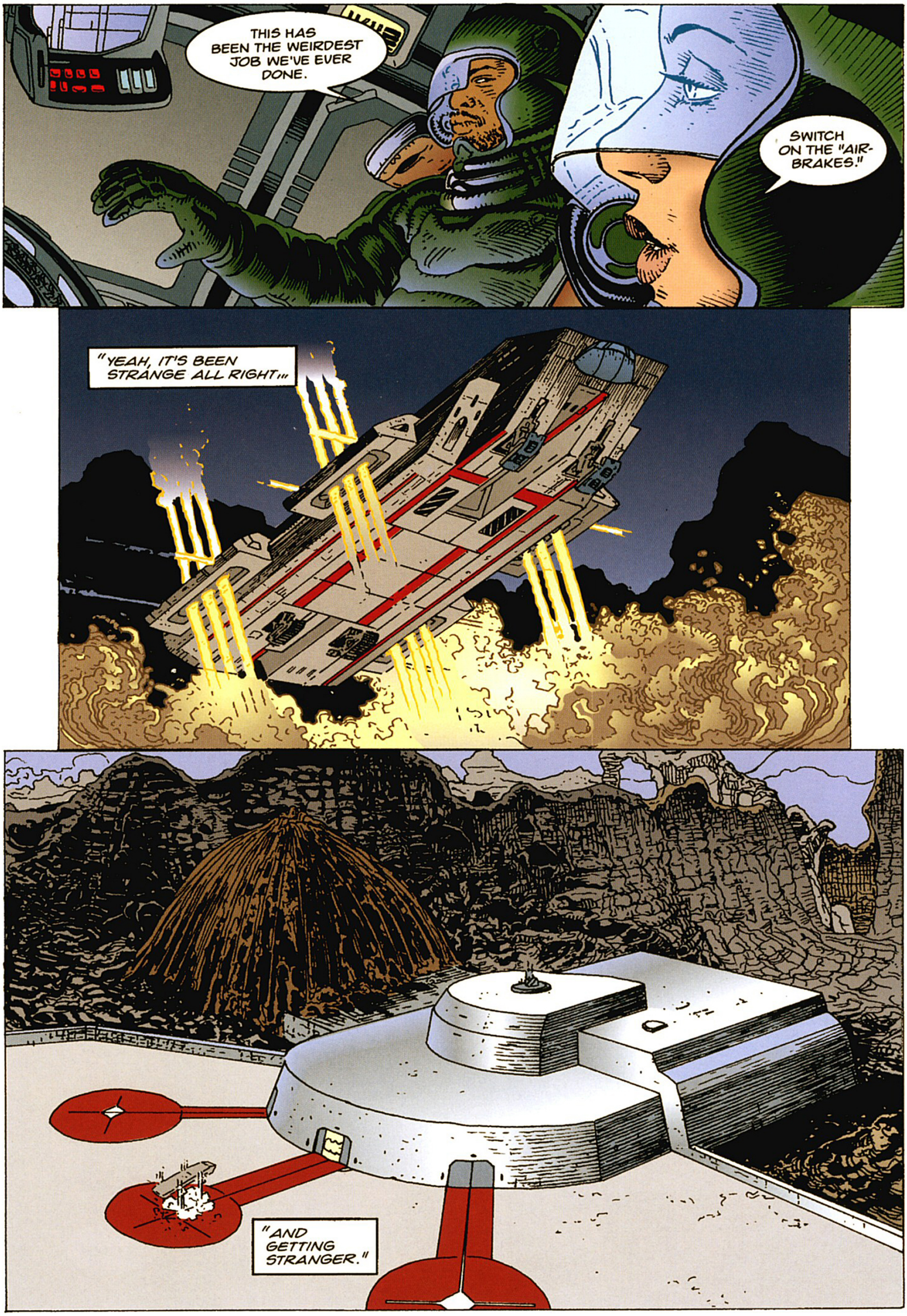
lettering
CLEM ROBINS

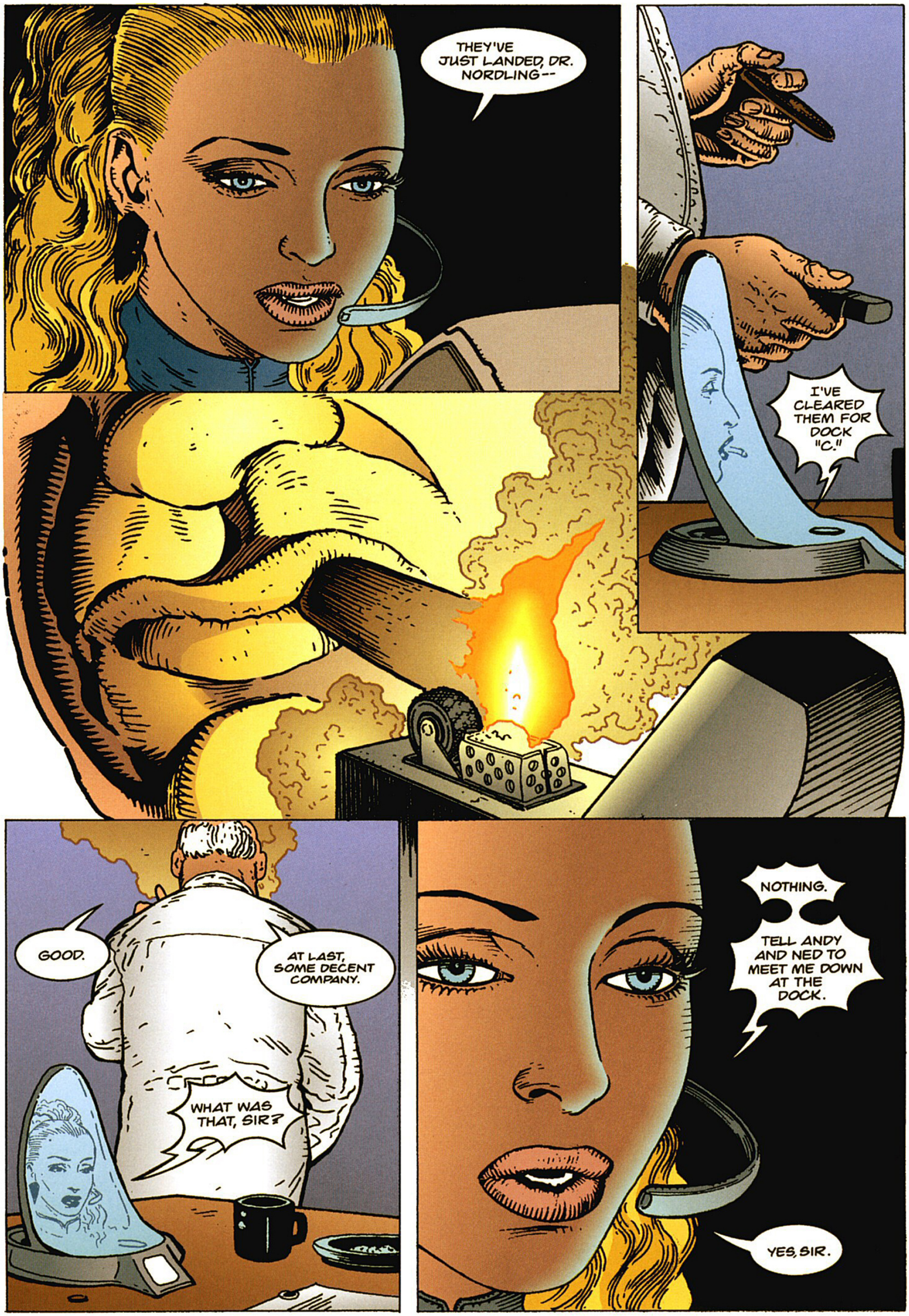
title illustration
TIMOTHY BRADSTREET with **GUY BURWELL**

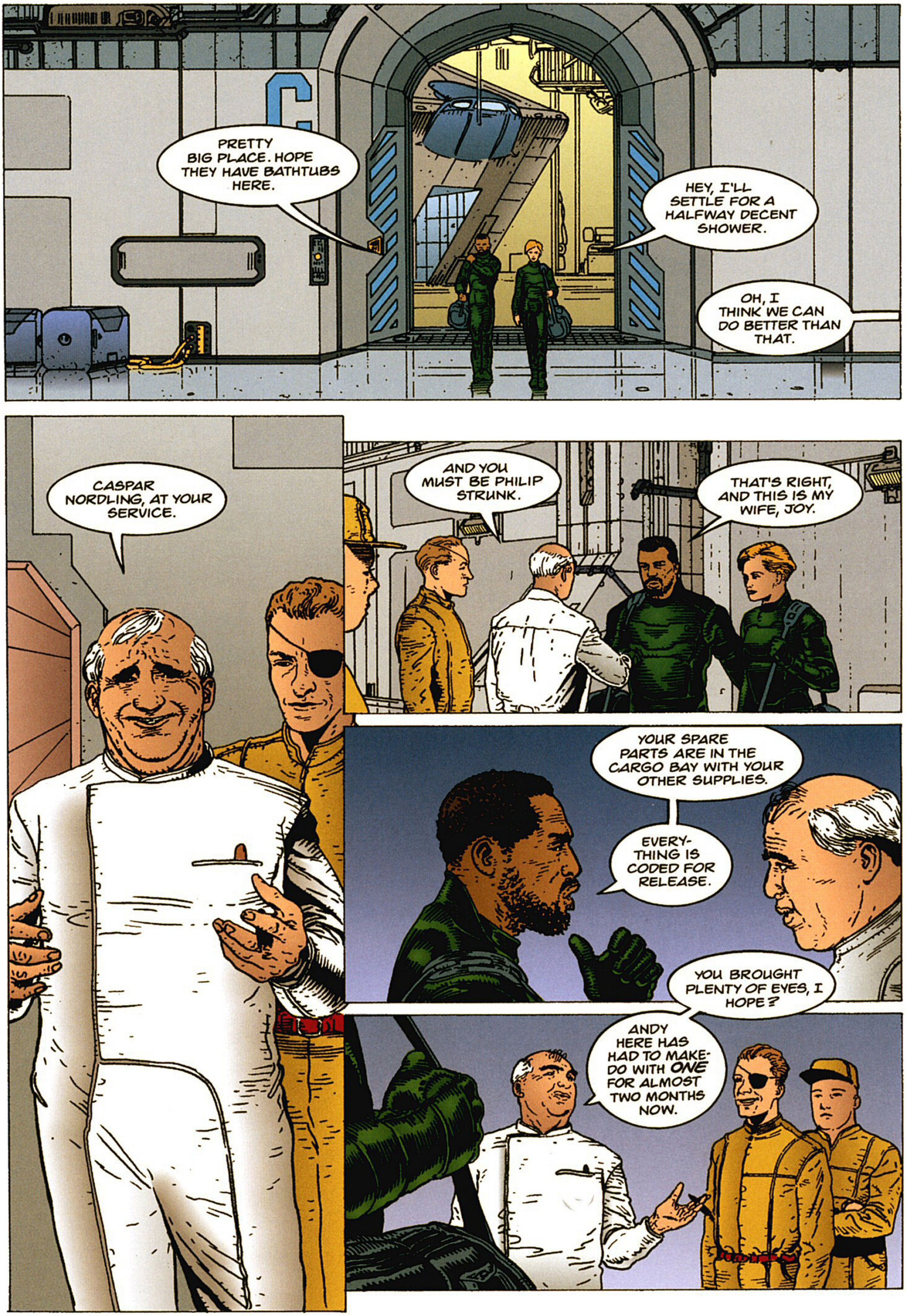

OVER HERE!
I'VE LOCATED A FEW MORE.
THEY'RE GETTING RATHER ADEPT AT HIDING THESE.
I'D FEEL MUCH BETTER IF YOU WOULD NOT SPEAK SO LOUDLY.
YOUR CONCERN IS UNWARRANTED. THEY'RE ALL IN THE OUTER CHAMBER, COLLECTING THE NEW HOST BODIES.
EVEN IF I WERE TO SHOUT, NONE OF THEM COULD HEAR ME ...
EXCEPT HER.


AND SHE ISN'T GOING ANY-WHERE.


MAN, WILL I BE GLAD WHEN WE UNLOAD THESE.
BEEP-EEP
PHIL! GET YOUR BUTT UP HERE!
WE'RE GETTING READY TO LAND.
WHERE WERE YOU?
DOWNSTAIRS, SECURING THE PARTS.


THIS HAS BEEN THE WEIRDEST JOB WE'VE EVER DONE.
SWITCH ON THE "AIR-BRAKES."
"YEAH, IT'S BEEN STRANGE ALL RIGHT...
"AND GETTING STRANGER."

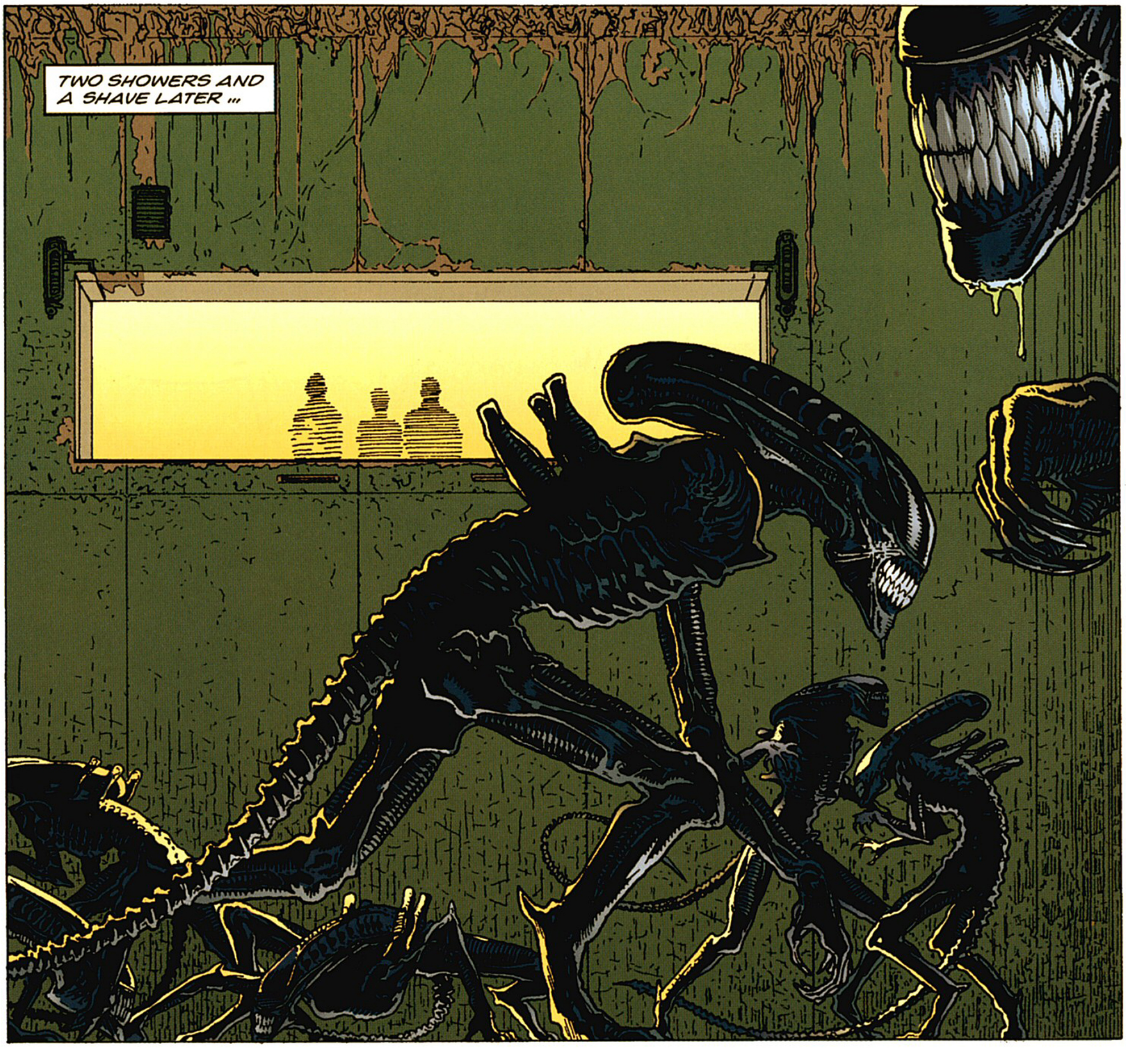

THEY'VE JUST LANDED, DR. NORDLING--
I'VE CLEARED THEM FOR DOCK "C."
GOOD.
AT LAST, SOME DECENT COMPANY.
WHAT WAS THAT, SIR?
NOTHING.
TELL ANDY AND NED TO MEET ME DOWN AT THE DOCK.
YES, SIR.

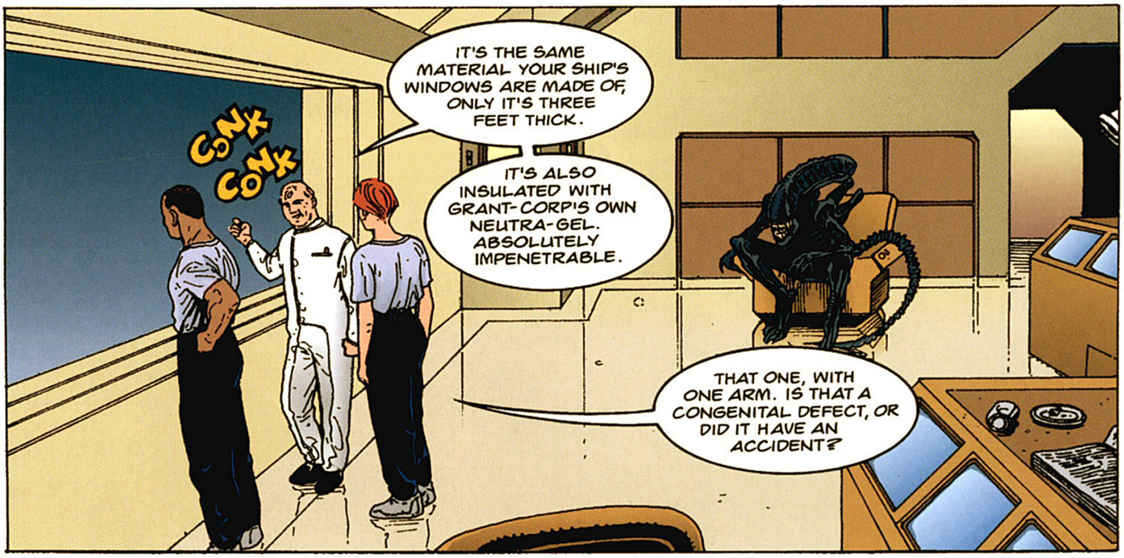

PRETTY BIG PLACE. HOPE THEY HAVE BATHTUBS HERE.
HEY, I'LL SETTLE FOR A HALFWAY DECENT SHOWER.
OH, I THINK WE CAN DO BETTER THAN THAT.
CASPAR NORDLING, AT YOUR SERVICE.
AND YOU MUST BE PHILIP STRUNK.
THAT'S RIGHT, AND THIS IS MY WIFE, JOY.
YOUR SPARE PARTS ARE IN THE CARGO BAY WITH YOUR OTHER SUPPLIES.
EVERY-THING IS CODED FOR RELEASE.
YOU BROUGHT PLENTY OF EYES, I HOPE?
ANDY HERE HAS HAD TO MAKE-DO WITH ONE FOR ALMOST TWO MONTHS NOW.

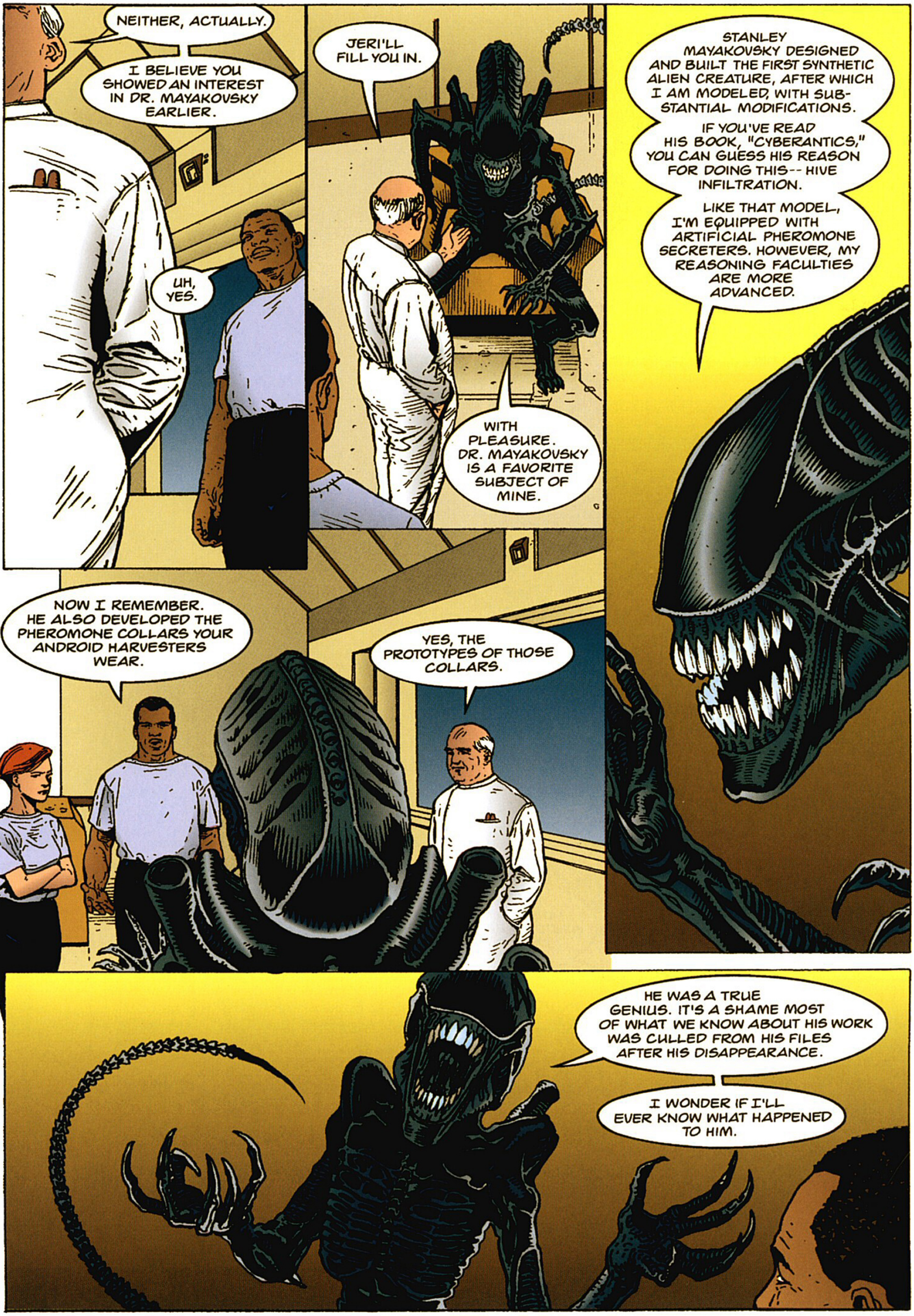
I'M SORRY ABOUT THE DELAY IN GETTING YOU YOUR PARTS, BUT--
AHH, FORGET IT. DEEP-SPACE TRAVEL IS EXPENSIVE.
GRANT-CORP CAN'T SCURRY OUT FOR EVERY REQUISITION. I KNOW THAT.
BESIDES, IT ISN'T LIKE THESE TWITS ARE ACTUALLY SUFFERING.
ANDY, YOU AND NED UN-LOAD THE CARGO.
C'MON, I'LL TAKE YOU TO YOUR QUARTERS. AFTER YOU WASH UP, I'LL INTRODUCE YOU TO JERI.
HE'LL BE HELPING YOU WITH THE HIVE SECURITY CHECK.
EXCUSE ME, DOCTOR, BUT SHOULDN'T WE BE HELPING THE SYNTHETICS?
C
NOT WITH *MY* BACK.
BUT IF *YOU* WANT TO, GO RIGHT AHEAD.
SO, YOU TWO ARE MARRIED.
MEET ON THE JOB?
OH, NO. WE WERE HIRED AS A MAINTENANCE TEAM *BECAUSE* WE WERE MARRIED.

THE LONG-TERM CLOSE QUARTERS CO-HABITATION THAT DEEP-SPACE TRAVEL REQUIRES CAN CAUSE FRICTION IN A CREW.
GRANT-CORP THOUGHT THAT MARRIED TECHNICAL TEAMS WERE AN IDEAL SOLUTION.
HOW PROGRESSIVE.
WHEN WAS YOUR LAST SECURITY SYSTEMS CHECK?
I DON'T KNOW, CAN'T REMEMBER THAT FAR BACK. FRANKLY, I DON'T SEE MUCH POINT IN IT.
OH, I KNOW IT'S YOUR JOB, BUT THIS SYSTEM IS FOOL-PROOF.
YOU'LL SEE WHAT I MEAN. THERE IS NO WAY ONE OF THOSE CREATURES COULD GET INTO THIS FACILITY.
AAAAAAAA
WHAT? WHAT IS IT?
BE-BEHIND YOU...

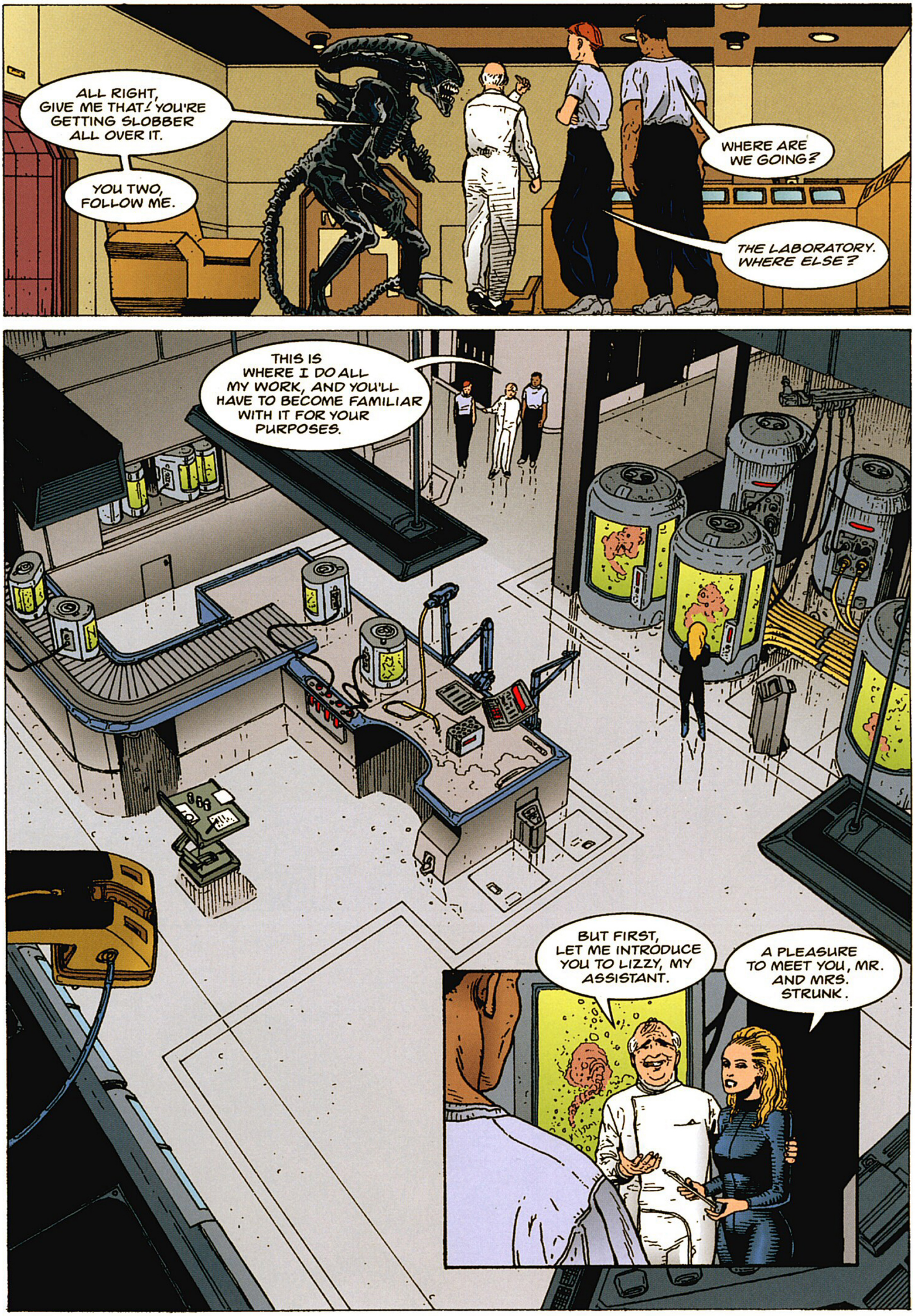
*See "HARVEST" in *Aliens Omnibus Volume 2*


TWO SHOWERS AND A SHAVE LATER ...


IT'S THE SAME MATERIAL YOUR SHIP'S WINDOWS ARE MADE OF, ONLY IT'S THREE FEET THICK.
CONK CONK
IT'S ALSO INSULATED WITH GRANT-CORP'S OWN NEUTRA-GEL. ABSOLUTELY IMPENETRABLE.
THAT ONE, WITH ONE ARM. IS THAT A CONGENITAL DEFECT, OR DID IT HAVE AN ACCIDENT?


NEITHER, ACTUALLY.
I BELIEVE YOU SHOWED AN INTEREST IN DR. MAYAKOVSKY EARLIER.
UH, YES.
JERI'LL FILL YOU IN.
WITH PLEASURE. DR. MAYAKOVSKY IS A FAVORITE SUBJECT OF MINE.
STANLEY MAYAKOVSKY DESIGNED AND BUILT THE FIRST SYNTHETIC ALIEN CREATURE, AFTER WHICH I AM MODELED, WITH SUB-STANTIAL MODIFICATIONS.
IF YOU'VE READ HIS BOOK, "CYBERANTICS," YOU CAN GUESS HIS REASON FOR DOING THIS-- HIVE INFILTRATION.
LIKE THAT MODEL, I'M EQUIPPED WITH ARTIFICIAL PHEROMONE SECRETERS. HOWEVER, MY REASONING FACULTIES ARE MORE ADVANCED.
NOW I REMEMBER. HE ALSO DEVELOPED THE PHEROMONE COLLARS YOUR ANDROID HARVESTERS WEAR.
YES, THE PROTOTYPES OF THOSE COLLARS.
HE WAS A TRUE GENIUS. IT'S A SHAME MOST OF WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT HIS WORK WAS CULLED FROM HIS FILES AFTER HIS DISAPPEARANCE.
I WONDER IF I'LL EVER KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM.

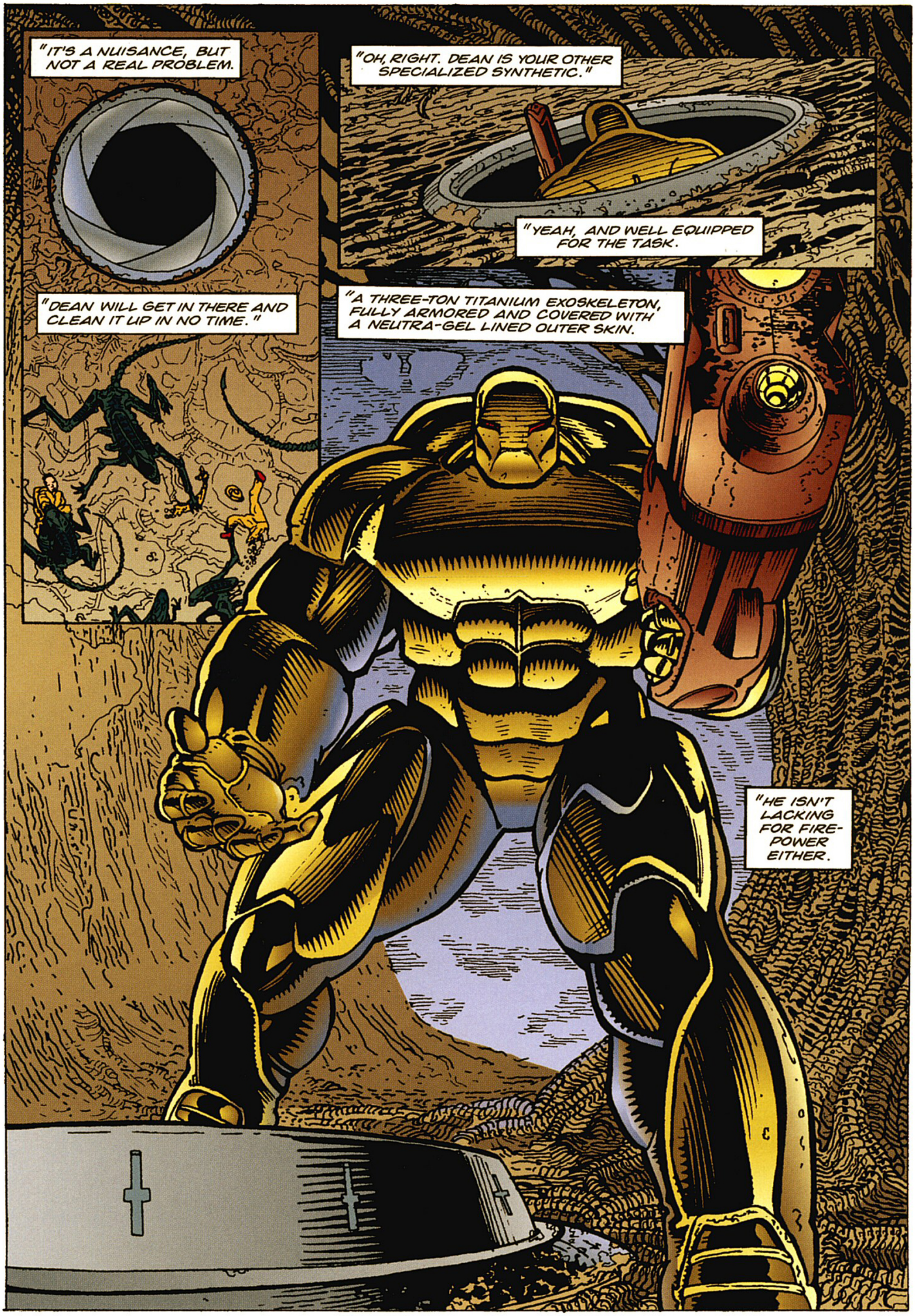
YOU KNOW, FOR AN ANDROID, YOU SURE GET MAUDLIN.
I KNOW WHAT'LL CHEER YOU UP.
IVA
YOU'RE GONNA LOVE THIS.
HAVE A CIGAR!
DR. NORDLING, DO I HAVE TO DO THIS?
SHUT UP AND START SMOKING.
NOW IS THAT A RIOT, OR WHAT?


ALL RIGHT, GIVE ME THAT! YOU'RE GETTING SLOBBER ALL OVER IT.
YOU TWO, FOLLOW ME.
WHERE ARE WE GOING?
THE LABORATORY. WHERE ELSE?
THIS IS WHERE I DO ALL MY WORK, AND YOU'LL HAVE TO BECOME FAMILIAR WITH IT FOR YOUR PURPOSES.
BUT FIRST, LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO LIZZY, MY ASSISTANT.
A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU, MR. AND MRS. STRUNK.

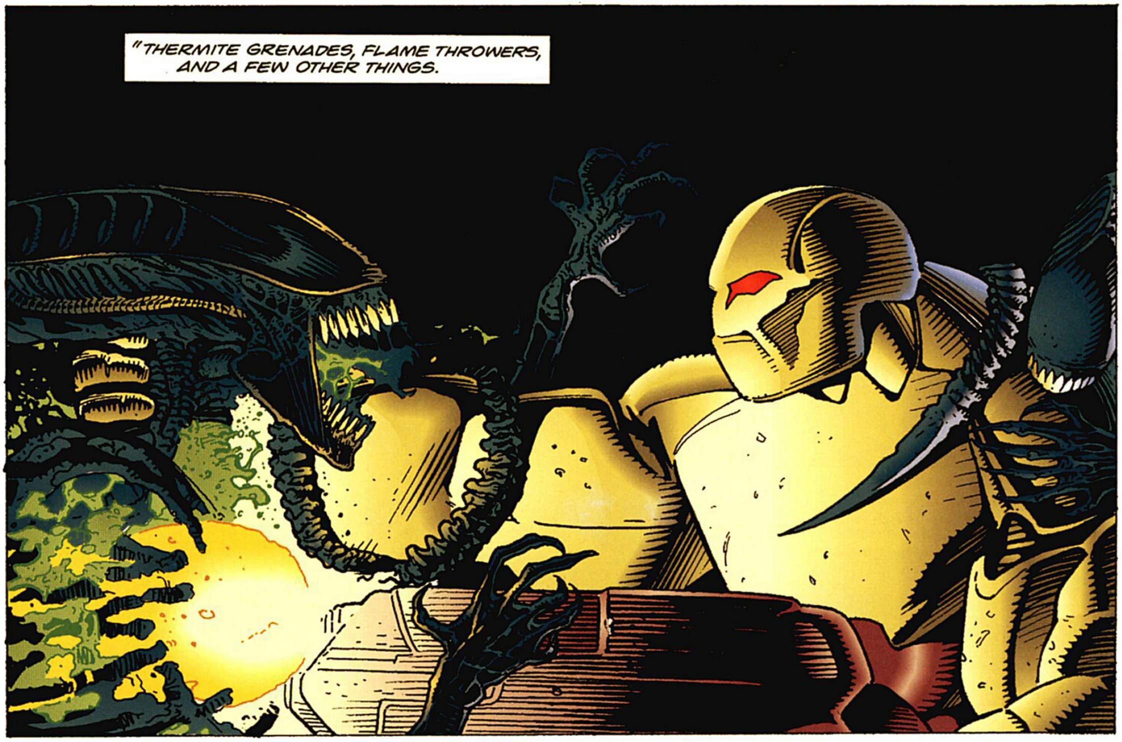
NOW I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH YOUR PEOPLE TOLD YOU ABOUT MY WORK, BECAUSE IT IS TOP-SECRET, SO LET ME GO OVER IT WITH YOU.
I'M WORKING TO DEVELOP A MICRO-ORGANISM THAT IS DEADLY TO THE CREATURES, BUT NOT PEOPLE. THE RAMIFICATIONS OF MY SUCCESS ARE ENORMOUS FOR GRANT-CORP.
I'VE HAD A LOT OF LUCK ENGINEERING SELECTIVE VIRUSES TO KILL PESTS, LIKE RATS OR WEEVILS, BUT THIS IS SOMETHING ALTOGETHER DIFFERENT.
HIGHLY SPECULATIVE. HIGHLY VOLATILE.
YOU'LL BE INSPECTING THIS MACHINE FOR ACCURACY. IT MONITORS ALL SEALS IN THIS LAB, ENSURING THAT IT'S AIRTIGHT.
WE WOULDN'T WANT ONE OF MY "UNPERFECTED" VIRUSES TO GET LOOSE.
NOT THAT IT WOULD HURT ANY OF MY ALL-SYNTHETIC STAFF. THEY ARE, OF COURSE, UNAFFECTED BY ANY VIRUS.
WELL, THANK YOU FOR EXPLAINING THAT, DOCTOR.
UMM, I'M CURIOUS, ISN'T IT LONELY HERE?
I MEAN, BEING THE ONLY HUMAN, AND ALL?
OH, SYNTHS AREN'T SUCH BAD COMPANY. IN FACT, THEY DON'T SMELL AS BAD AS SOME HUMANS I KNOW.
UNLESS THEY CUT THEMSELVES. THAT WHITE JUICE THAT LEAKS OUT REALLY STINKS!
AND THEY ALWAYS DO EXACTLY WHAT I TELL THEM TO.

BWAAAAA BWAAAAA BWAAAAA
AW, CRAP!
WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?!
THE HIVE ALARM. WE'D BETTER HEAD BACK TO THE OBSERVATION DECK.

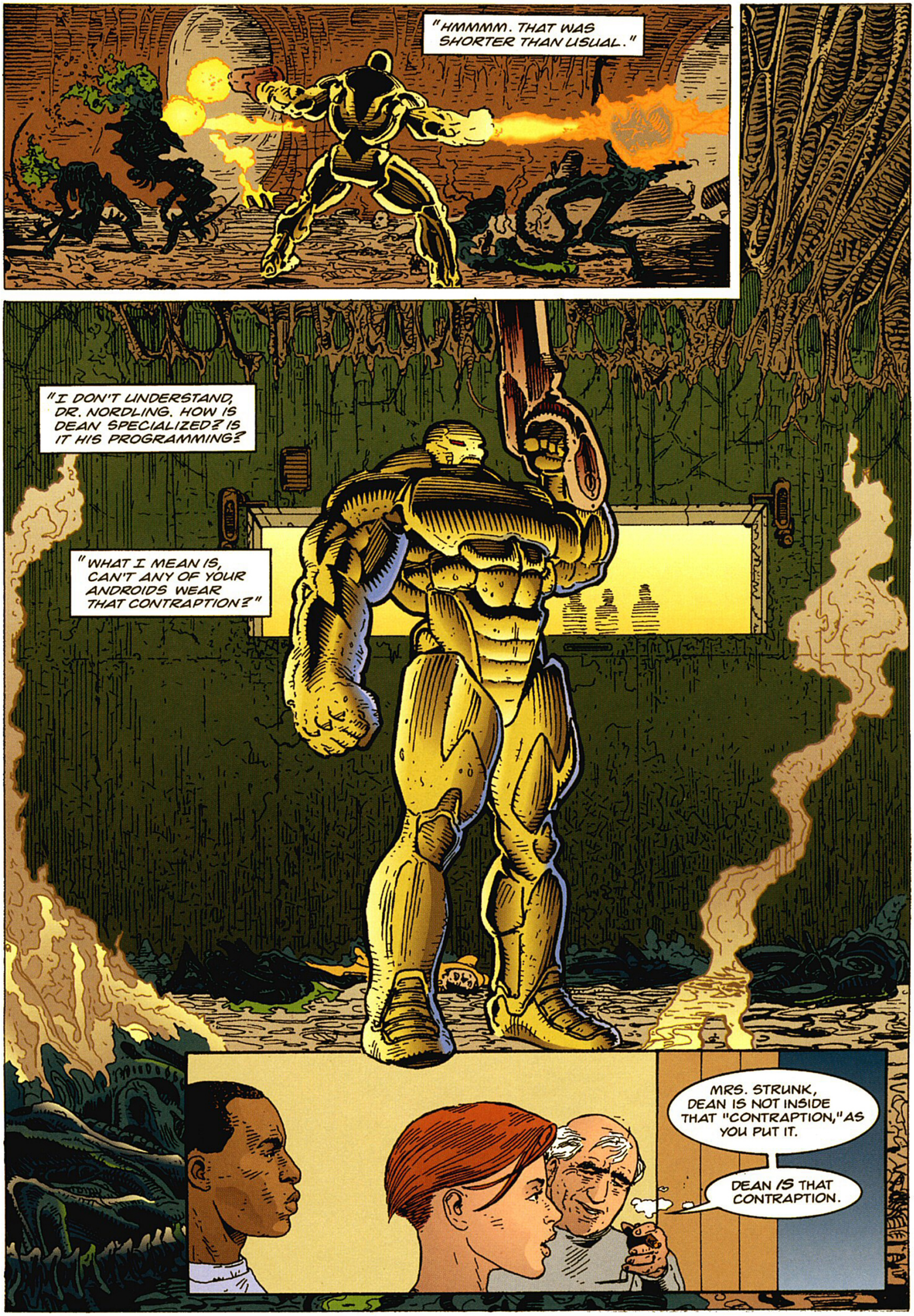
"YOU SEE, SOMETIMES THE HARVEST CREWS STAY IN THE HIVE TOO LONG.
"THE PHEROMONE COLLARS ARE ONLY GOOD IF YOU DON'T MOVE. THE CREATURES ARE VERY SENSITIVE TO MOTION.
"JUST BY YOUR MOVE-MENT, THEY CAN TELL YOU'RE NOT ONE OF THEM.

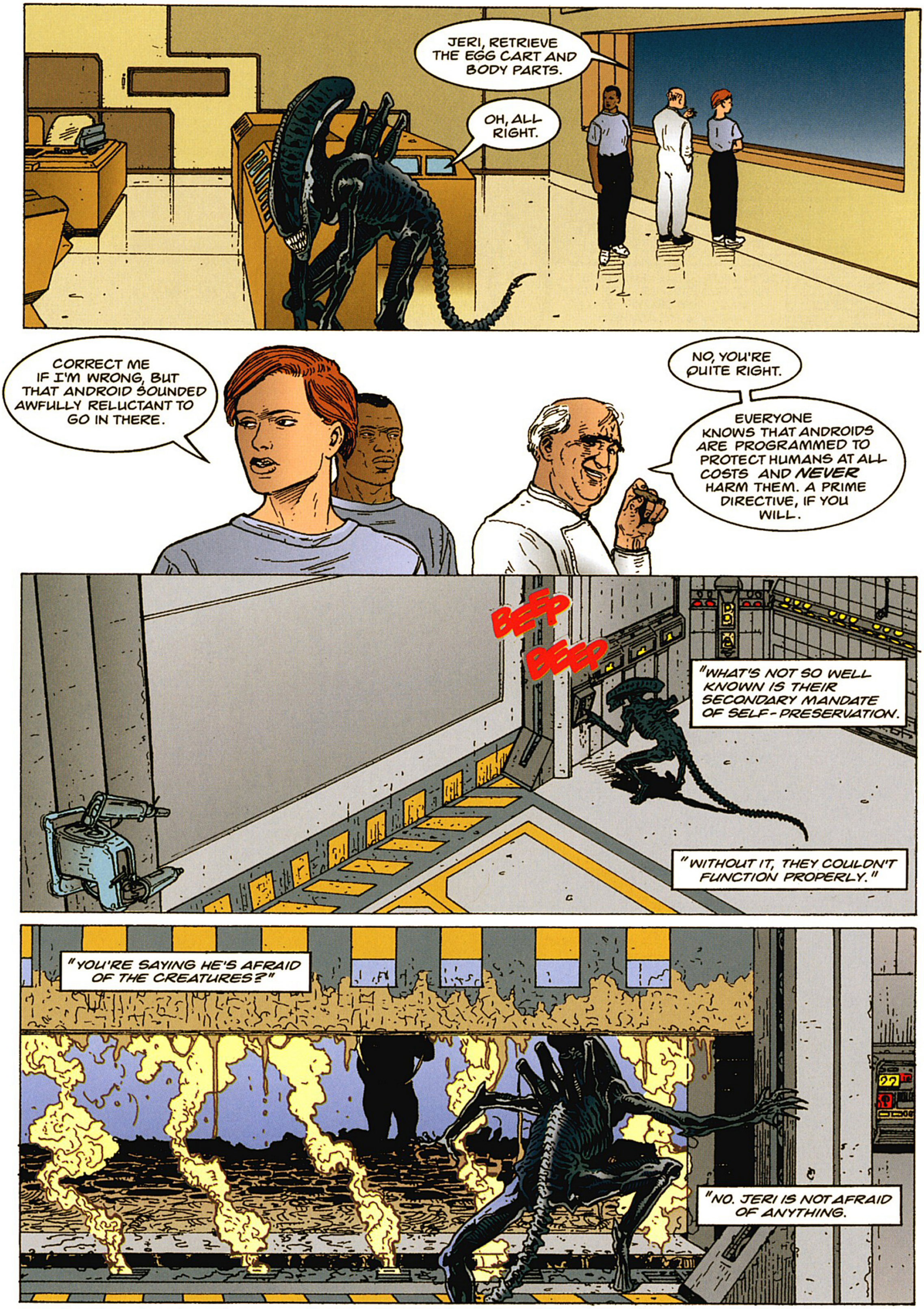

"IT'S A NUISANCE, BUT NOT A REAL PROBLEM.
"OH, RIGHT. DEAN IS YOUR OTHER SPECIALIZED SYNTHETIC."
"YEAH, AND WELL EQUIPPED FOR THE TASK.
"DEAN WILL GET IN THERE AND CLEAN IT UP IN NO TIME."
"A THREE-TON TITANIUM EXOSKELETON, FULLY ARMORED AND COVERED WITH A NEUTRA-GEL LINED OUTER SKIN.
"HE ISN'T LACKING FOR FIRE-POWER EITHER.

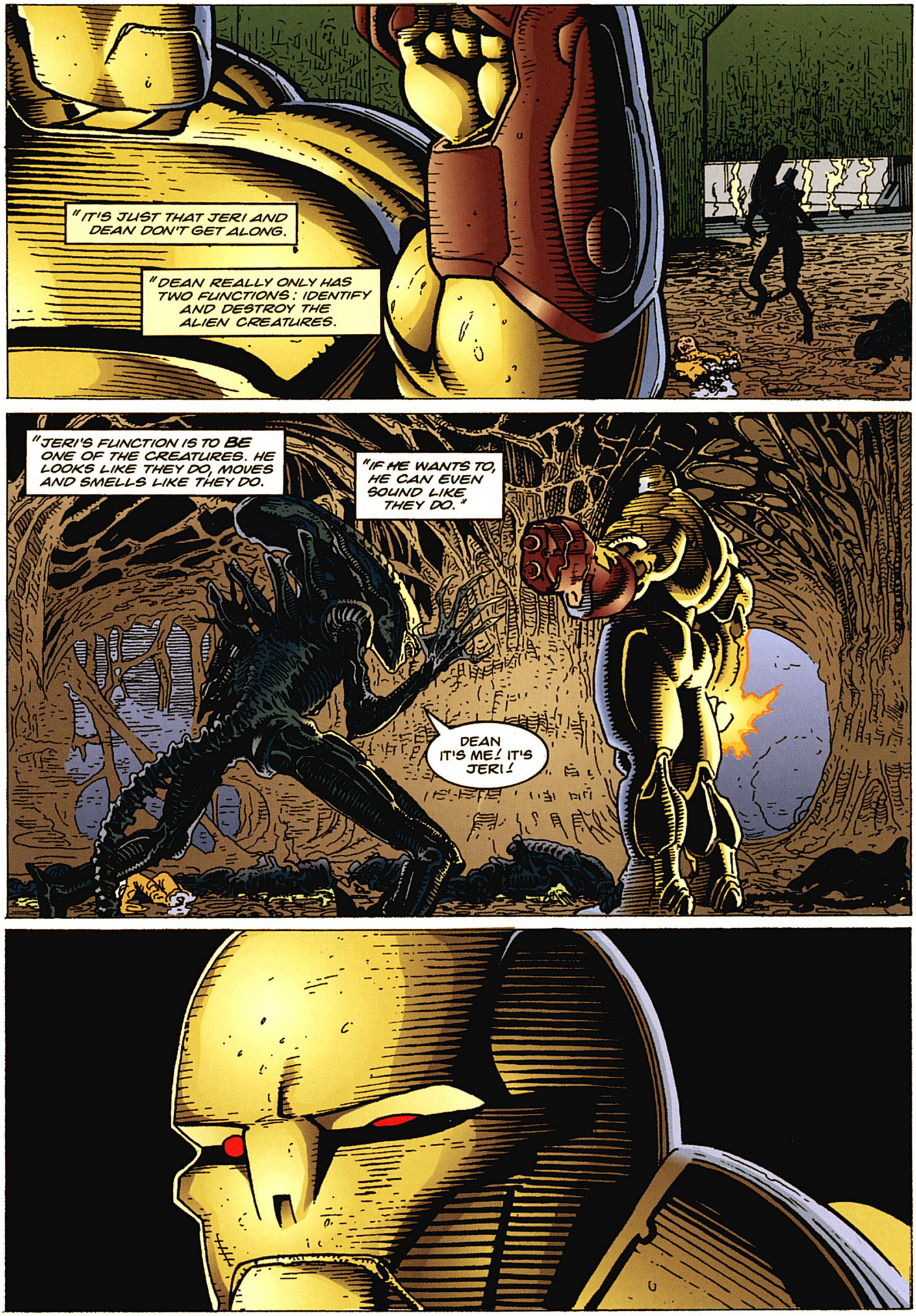
"A PLASMA RIFLE OF OBSCENE CONCUSSIVE FORCE, WITH AN ALMOST INEXHAUSTIBLE ENERGY SUPPLY.

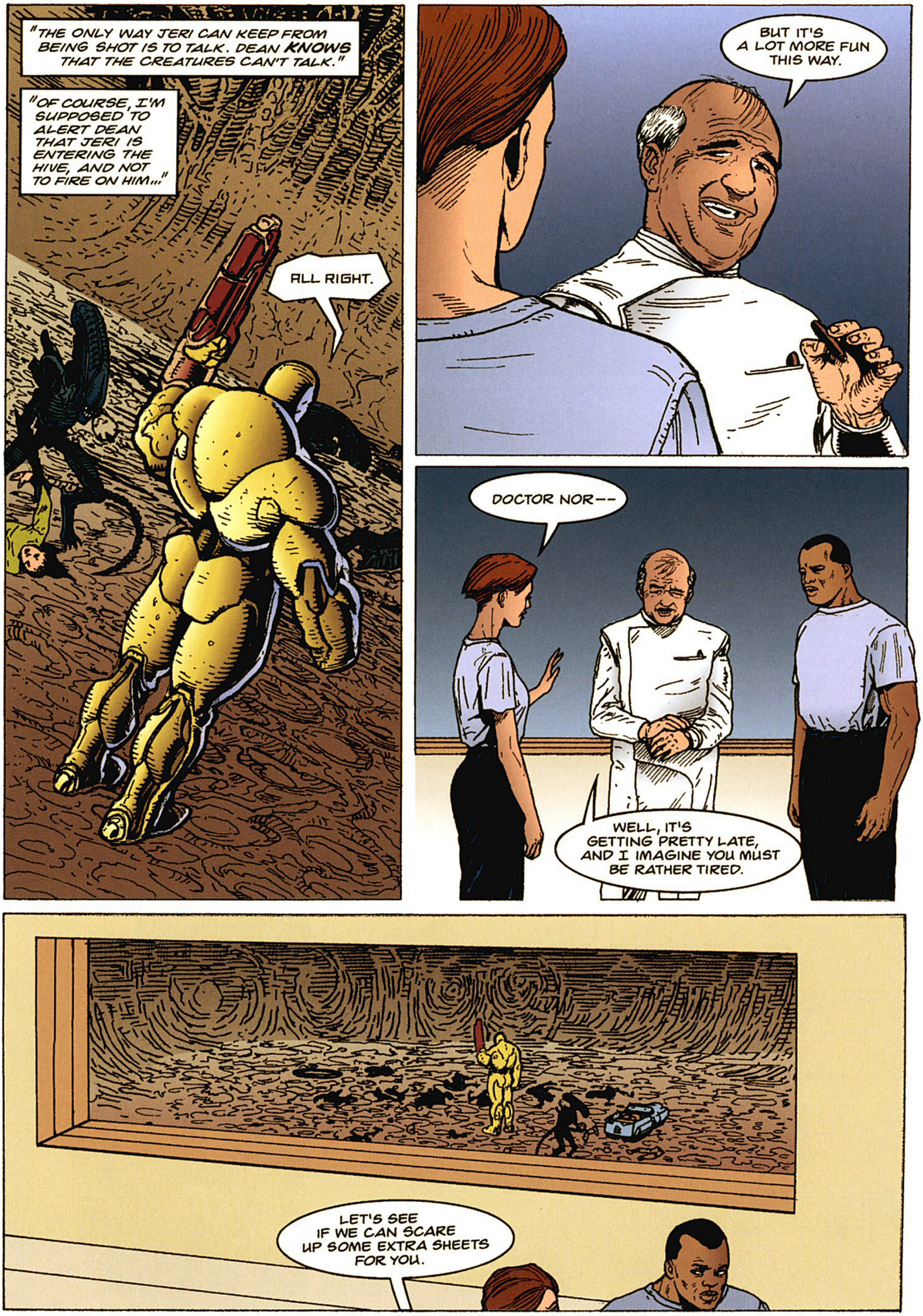

"THERMITE GRENADES, FLAME THROWERS, AND A FEW OTHER THINGS.

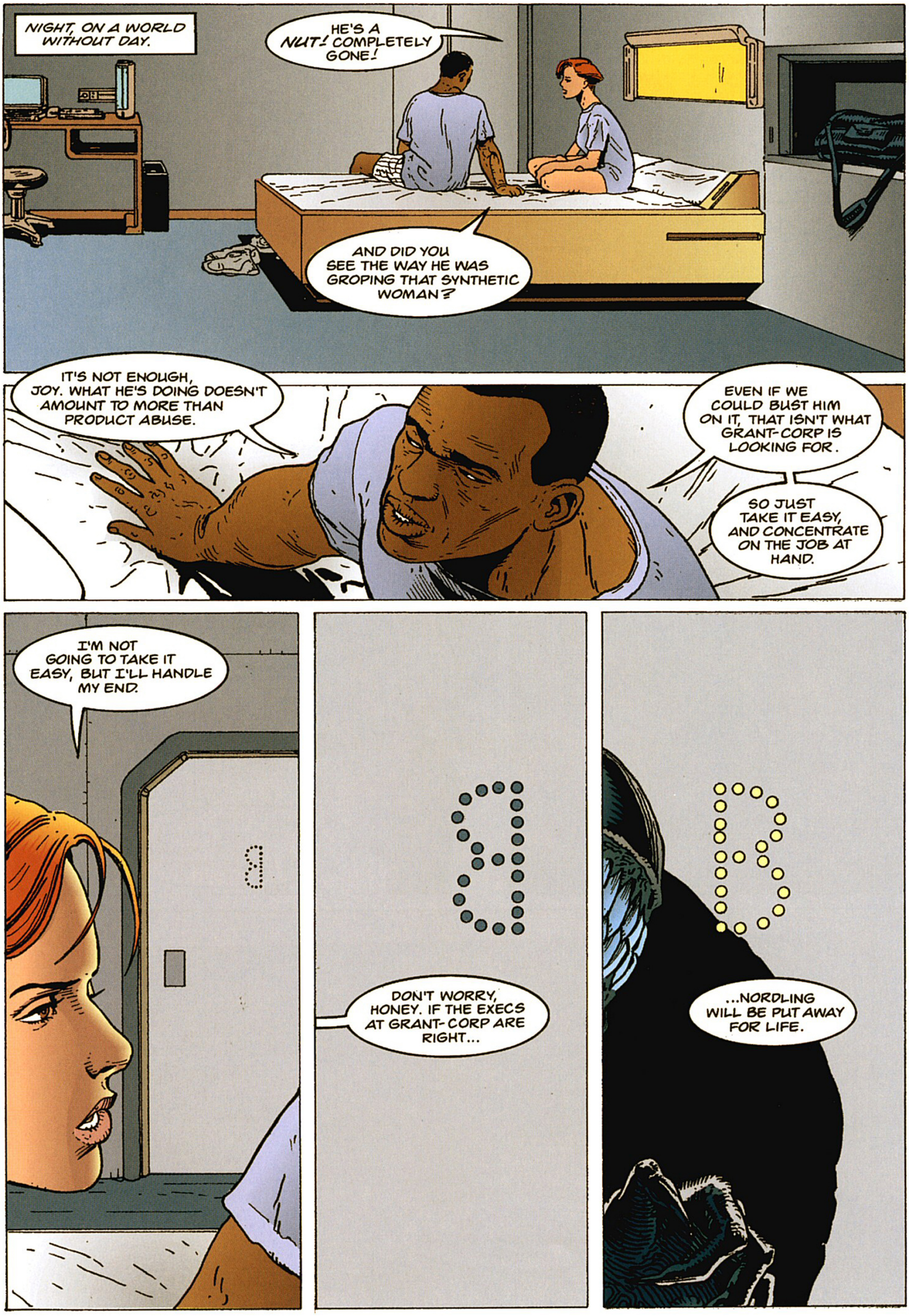
"IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE I READ THE MANUAL.

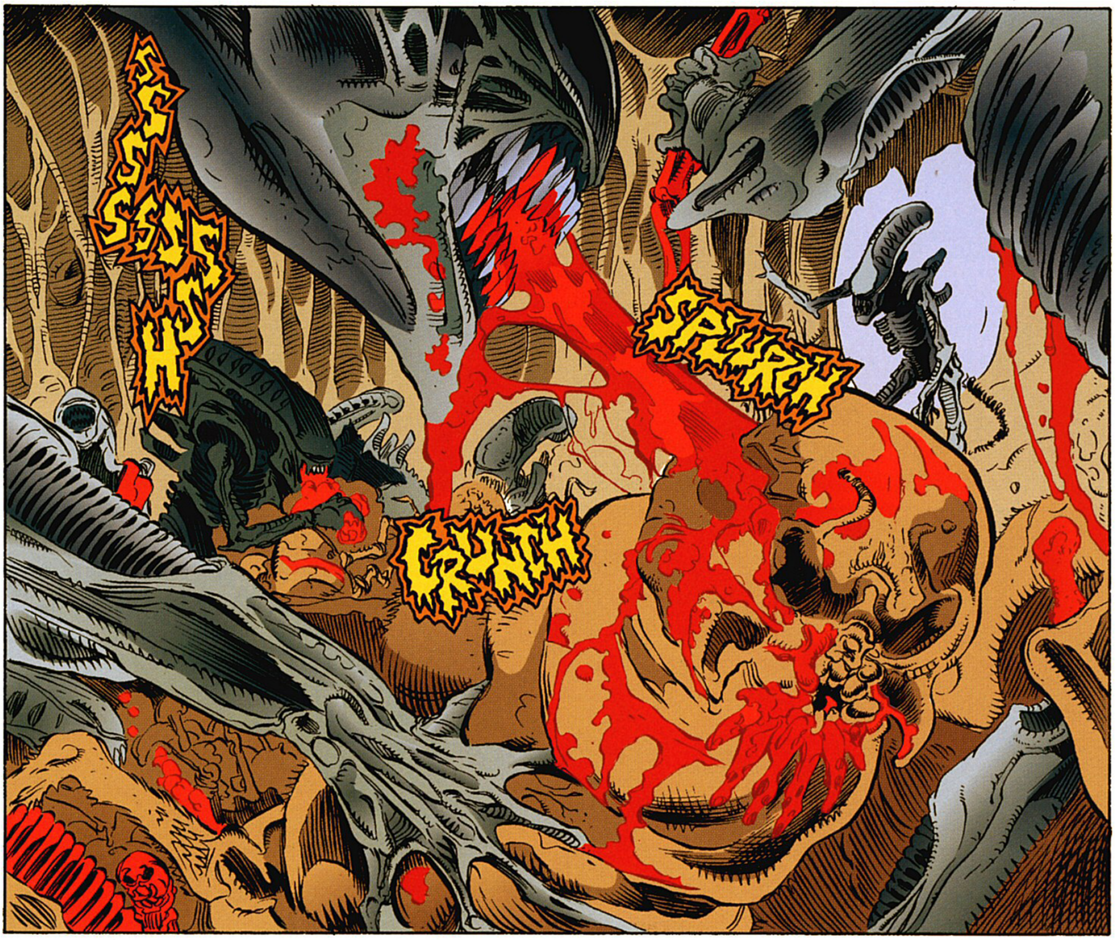

"HMMMM. THAT WAS SHORTER THAN USUAL."
"I DON'T UNDERSTAND, DR. NORDLING. HOW IS DEAN SPECIALIZED? IS IT HIS PROGRAMMING?
"WHAT I MEAN IS, CAN'T ANY OF YOUR ANDROIDS WEAR THAT CONTRAPTION?"
MRS. STRUNK, DEAN IS NOT INSIDE THAT "CONTRAPTION," AS YOU PUT IT.
DEAN IS THAT CONTRAPTION.

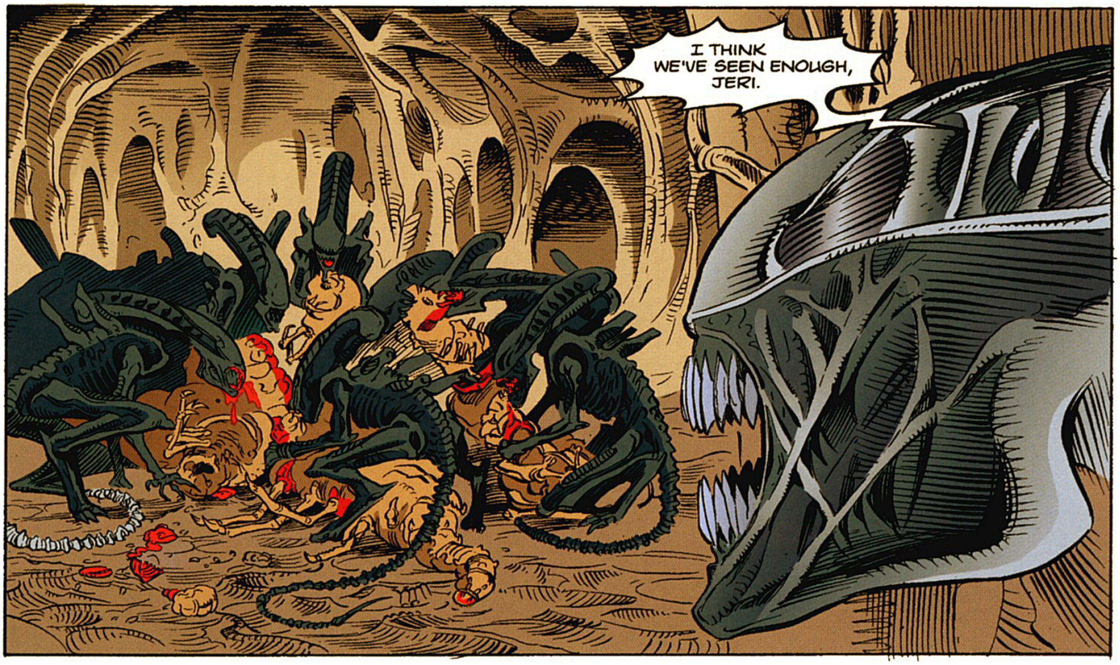

JERI, RETRIEVE THE EGG CART AND BODY PARTS.
OH, ALL RIGHT.
CORRECT ME IF I'M WRONG, BUT THAT ANDROID SOUNDED AWFULLY RELUCTANT TO GO IN THERE.
NO, YOU'RE QUITE RIGHT.
EVERYONE KNOWS THAT ANDROIDS ARE PROGRAMMED TO PROTECT HUMANS AT ALL COSTS AND NEVER HARM THEM. A PRIME DIRECTIVE, IF YOU WILL.
BEEP
BEEP
"WHAT'S NOT SO WELL KNOWN IS THEIR SECONDARY MANDATE OF SELF-PRESERVATION.
"WITHOUT IT, THEY COULDN'T FUNCTION PROPERLY."
"YOU'RE SAYING HE'S AFRAID OF THE CREATURES?"
"NO. JERI IS NOT AFRAID OF ANYTHING.


"IT'S JUST THAT JERI AND DEAN DON'T GET ALONG.
"DEAN REALLY ONLY HAS TWO FUNCTIONS: IDENTIFY AND DESTROY THE ALIEN CREATURES.
"JERI'S FUNCTION IS TO BE ONE OF THE CREATURES. HE LOOKS LIKE THEY DO, MOVES AND SMELLS LIKE THEY DO.
"IF HE WANTS TO, HE CAN EVEN SOUND LIKE THEY DO."
DEAN IT'S ME! IT'S JERI!

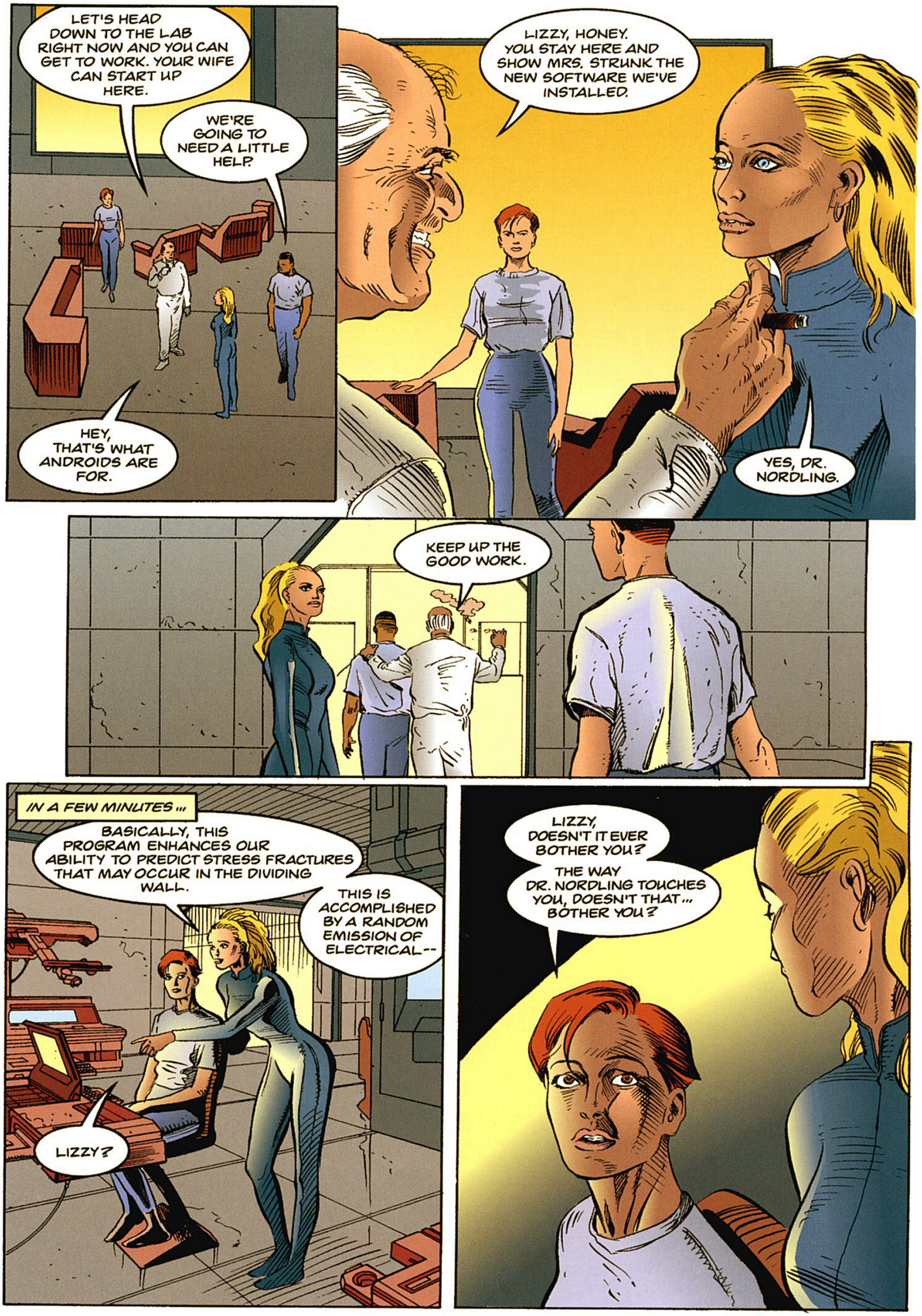

"THE ONLY WAY JERI CAN KEEP FROM BEING SHOT IS TO TALK. DEAN KNOWS THAT THE CREATURES CAN'T TALK."
"OF COURSE, I'M SUPPOSED TO ALERT DEAN THAT JERI IS ENTERING THE HIVE, AND NOT TO FIRE ON HIM..."
ALL RIGHT.
BUT IT'S A LOT MORE FUN THIS WAY.
DOCTOR NOR--
WELL, IT'S GETTING PRETTY LATE, AND I IMAGINE YOU MUST BE RATHER TIRED.
LET'S SEE IF WE CAN SCARE UP SOME EXTRA SHEETS FOR YOU.

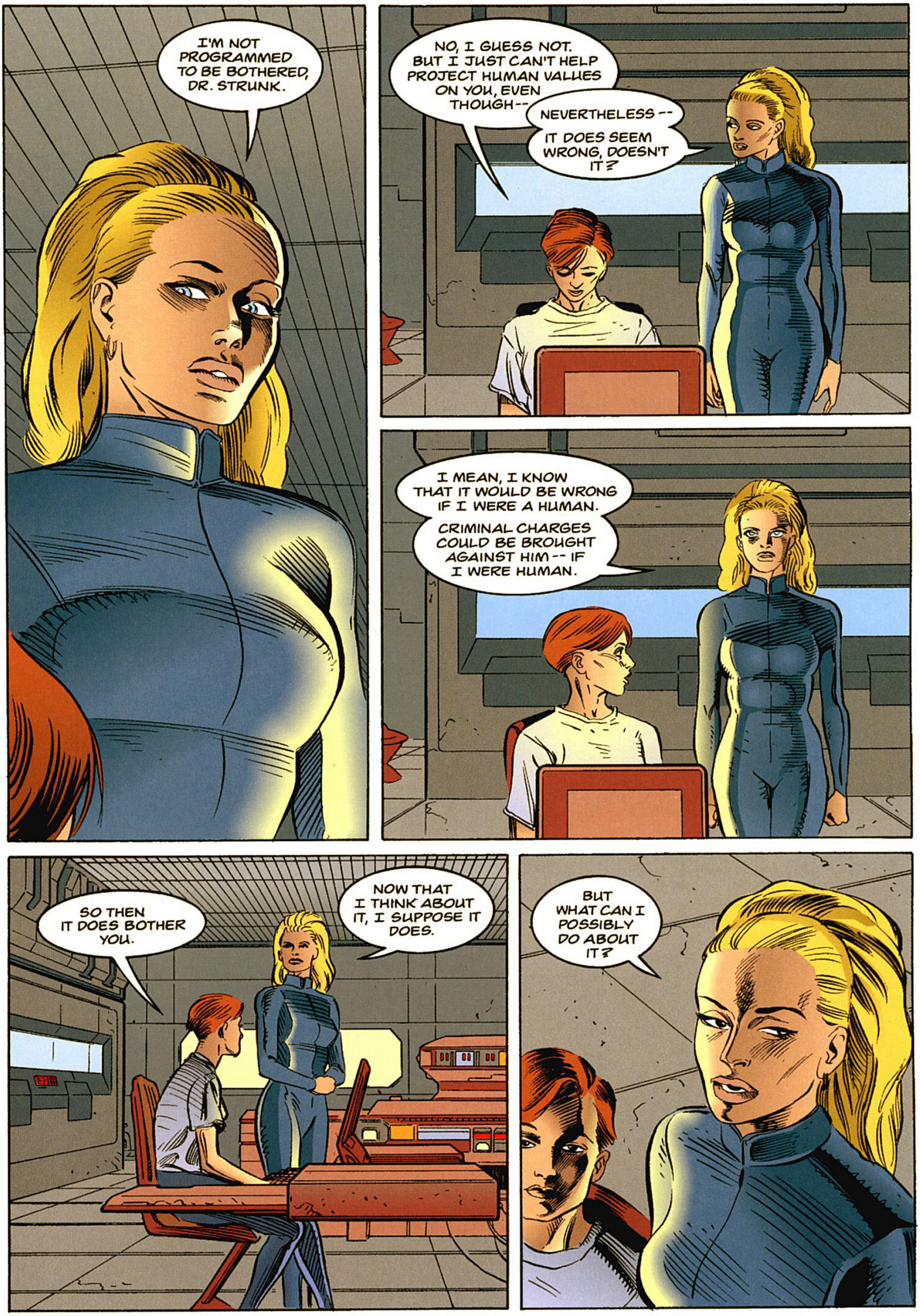

NIGHT, ON A WORLD WITHOUT DAY.
HE'S A NUT! COMPLETELY GONE!
AND DID YOU SEE THE WAY HE WAS GROPING THAT SYNTHETIC WOMAN?
IT'S NOT ENOUGH, JOY. WHAT HE'S DOING DOESN'T AMOUNT TO MORE THAN PRODUCT ABUSE.
EVEN IF WE COULD BUST HIM ON IT, THAT ISN'T WHAT GRANT-CORP IS LOOKING FOR.
SO JUST TAKE IT EASY, AND CONCENTRATE ON THE JOB AT HAND.
I'M NOT GOING TO TAKE IT EASY, BUT I'LL HANDLE MY END.
B
DON'T WORRY, HONEY. IF THE EXECS AT GRANT-CORP ARE RIGHT...
B
...NORDLING WILL BE PUT AWAY FOR LIFE.

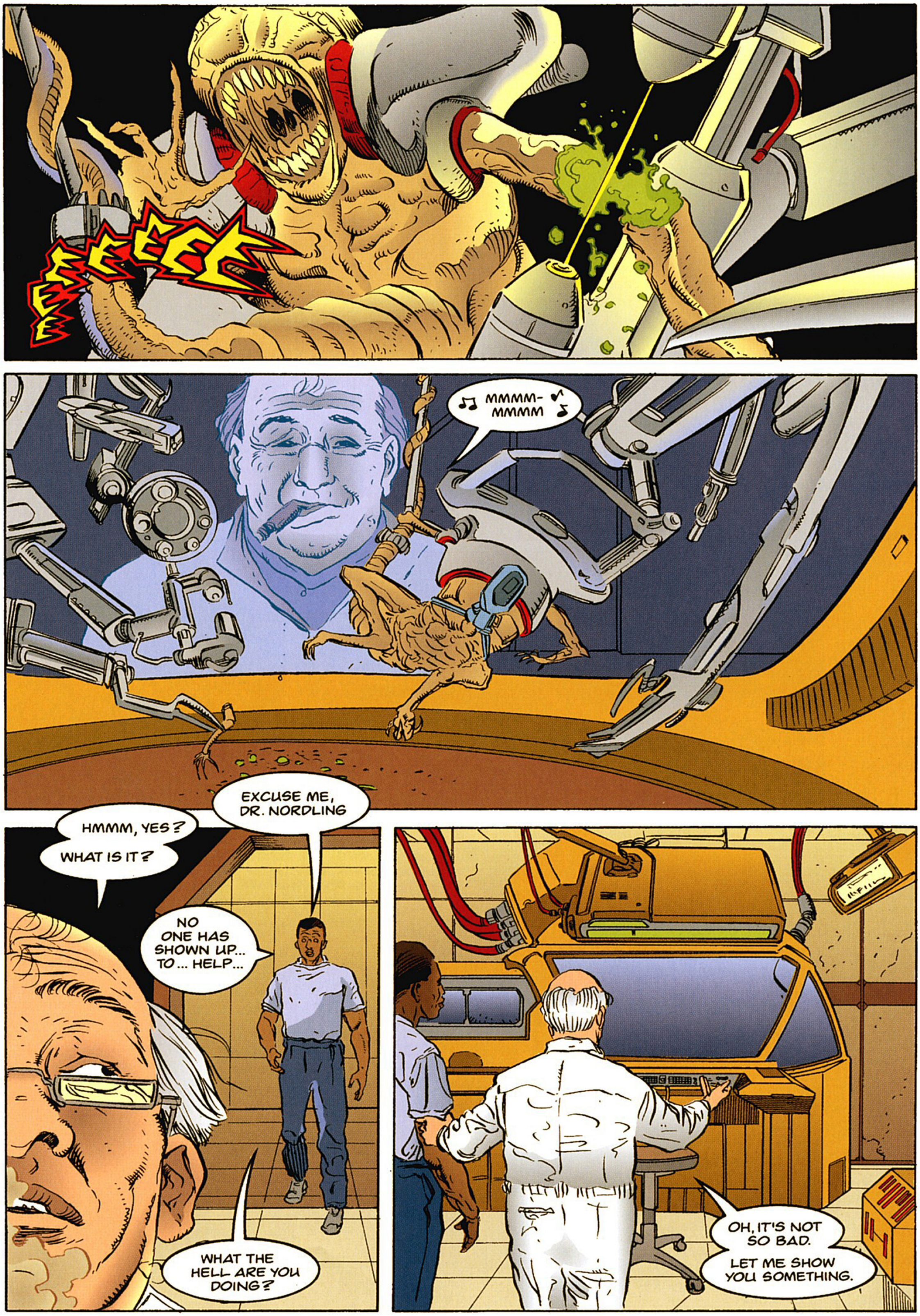

SPLURCH
CRUNCH

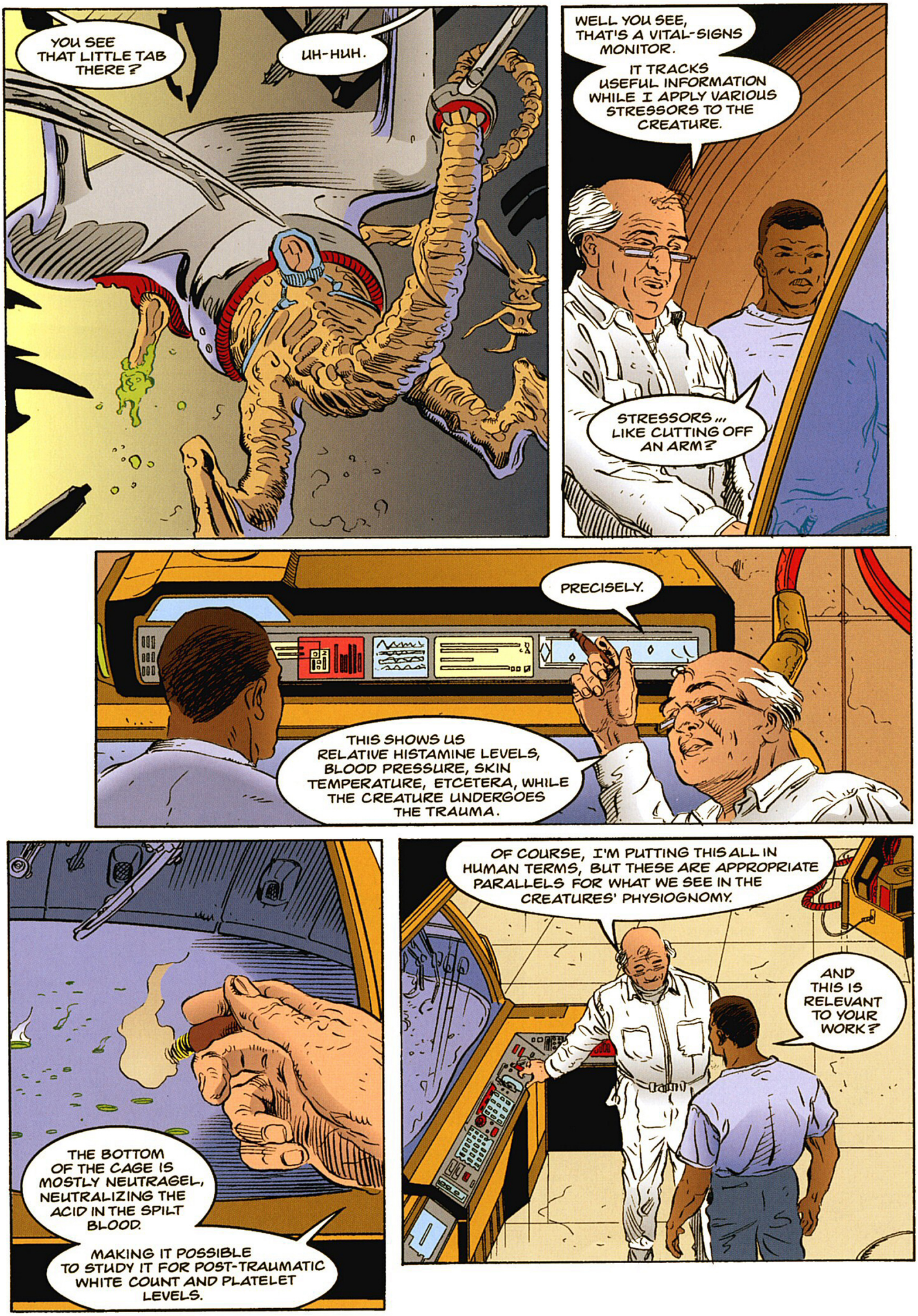

I THINK WE'VE SEEN ENOUGH, JERI.

WHY DON'T WE MOVE ON?
YEAH, WHY *DON'T* WE?
WHAT'S THE PROBLEM? I MEAN, THIS IS WHY A CAMERA WAS INSTALLED IN JERI'S HEAD-- TO RUN VISUAL SECURITY CHECKS.
I DON'T THINK THERE'S ANY NEED TO DO IT DURING FEEDING TIME.
OH, THAT'S NOTHING. WAIT TILL YOU SEE THE HOST BODIES IN THE GESTATION CHAMBER.
LOOK, DR. NORDLING, *ANYONE* CAN DO THESE VISUAL CHECKS.
WE CAME HERE TO RUN DIAGNOSTICS ON THE MONITORING SYSTEMS THAT DETECT THE SMALLER, INVISIBLE VIOLATIONS OF SECURITY.
I SEE YOUR POINT, DR. STRUNK.
THIS REALLY IS JUST A WASTE OF YOUR TIME.

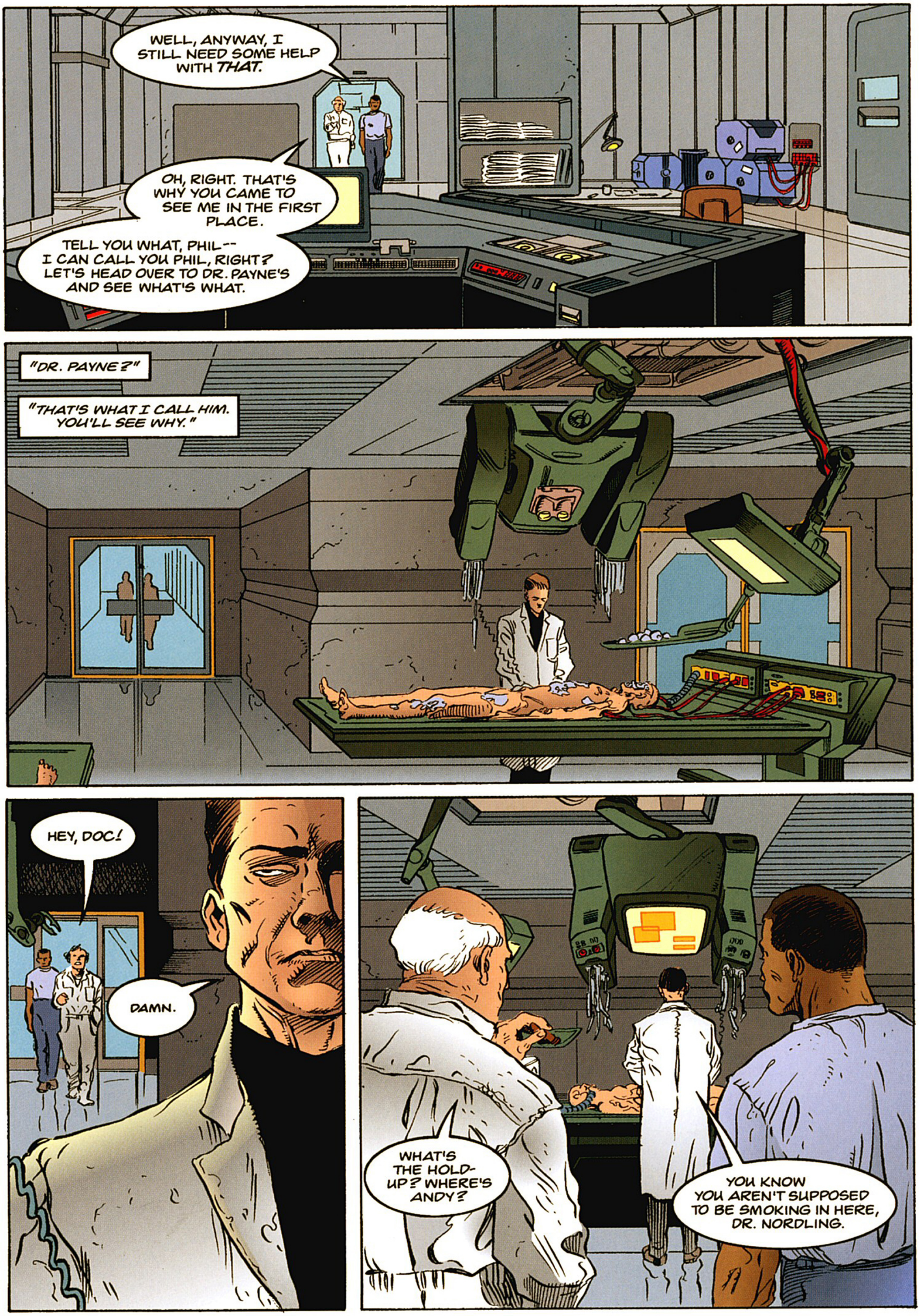

LET'S HEAD DOWN TO THE LAB RIGHT NOW AND YOU CAN GET TO WORK. YOUR WIFE CAN START UP HERE.
WE'RE GOING TO NEED A LITTLE HELP.
HEY, THAT'S WHAT ANDROIDS ARE FOR.
LIZZY, HONEY. YOU STAY HERE AND SHOW MRS. STRUNK THE NEW SOFTWARE WE'VE INSTALLED.
YES, DR. NORDLING.
KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK.
IN A FEW MINUTES...
BASICALLY, THIS PROGRAM ENHANCES OUR ABILITY TO PREDICT STRESS FRACTURES THAT MAY OCCUR IN THE DIVIDING WALL.
THIS IS ACCOMPLISHED BY A RANDOM EMISSION OF ELECTRICAL--
LIZZY?
LIZZY, DOESN'T IT EVER BOTHER YOU?
THE WAY DR. NORDLING TOUCHES YOU, DOESN'T THAT... BOTHER YOU?


I'M NOT PROGRAMMED TO BE BOTHERED, DR. STRUNK.
NO, I GUESS NOT. BUT I JUST CAN'T HELP PROJECT HUMAN VALUES ON YOU, EVEN THOUGH--
NEVERTHELESS --
IT DOES SEEM WRONG, DOESN'T IT?
I MEAN, I KNOW THAT IT WOULD BE WRONG IF I WERE A HUMAN.
CRIMINAL CHARGES COULD BE BROUGHT AGAINST HIM -- IF I WERE HUMAN.
SO THEN IT DOES BOTHER YOU.
NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, I SUPPOSE IT DOES.
BUT WHAT CAN I POSSIBLY DO ABOUT IT?

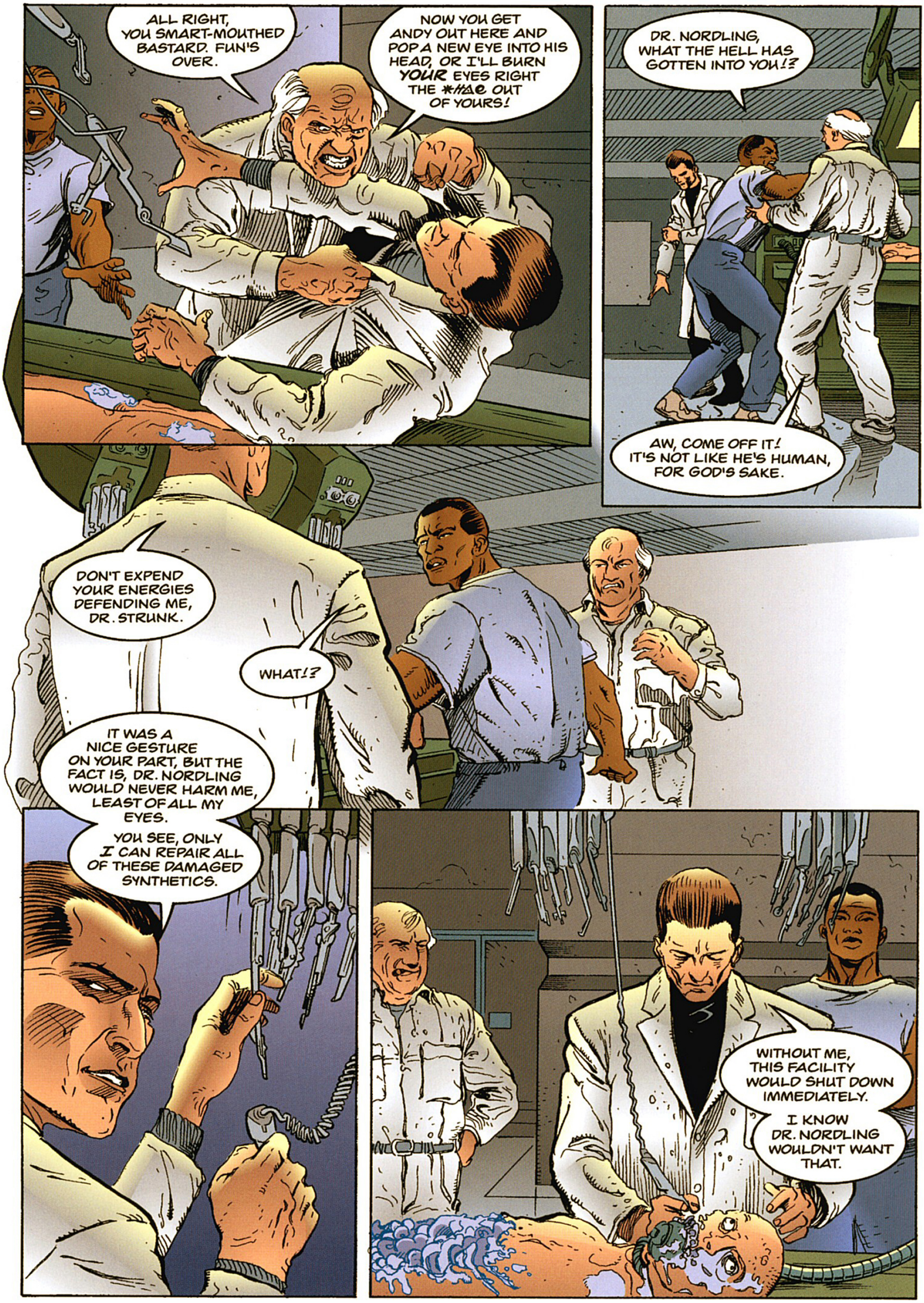

EEEEEE
♫ MMMM-MMMM ♪
HMMM, YES?
WHAT IS IT?
EXCUSE ME, DR. NORDLING
NO ONE HAS SHOWN UP... TO ... HELP...
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?
OH, IT'S NOT SO BAD.
LET ME SHOW YOU SOMETHING.


YOU SEE THAT LITTLE TAB THERE?
UH-HUH.
WELL YOU SEE, THAT'S A VITAL-SIGNS MONITOR.
IT TRACKS USEFUL INFORMATION WHILE I APPLY VARIOUS STRESSORS TO THE CREATURE.
STRESSORS... LIKE CUTTING OFF AN ARM?
PRECISELY.
THIS SHOWS US RELATIVE HISTAMINE LEVELS, BLOOD PRESSURE, SKIN TEMPERATURE, ETCETERA, WHILE THE CREATURE UNDERGOES THE TRAUMA.
THE BOTTOM OF THE CAGE IS MOSTLY NEUTRAGEL, NEUTRALIZING THE ACID IN THE SPILT BLOOD.
MAKING IT POSSIBLE TO STUDY IT FOR POST-TRAUMATIC WHITE COUNT AND PLATELET LEVELS.
OF COURSE, I'M PUTTING THIS ALL IN HUMAN TERMS, BUT THESE ARE APPROPRIATE PARALLELS FOR WHAT WE SEE IN THE CREATURES' PHYSIOGNOMY.
AND THIS IS RELEVANT TO YOUR WORK?

OH, VERY MUCH SO, DR. STRUNK.
ALL THIS IS KEY TO MY UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR IMMUNE SYSTEM-- A "SYSTEM" I'M TRYING TO "BEAT."
I SEE. SO WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THE BODIES?
BODIES? WELL, MOST OF THEM LIVE.
THEY HAVE REMARKABLE RECOVERY AND SURVIVAL SKILLS. TRUE, THEY ARE RELEASED INTO A BENIGN ENVIRONMENT. THEIR HIVE--
AH, BUT THAT'S ANOTHER STUDY ALTOGETHER.
YOU KNOW, YOU SEEM SO DIFFERENT TODAY. I MEAN, YESTERDAY YOU WERE SO INFORMAL, ALMOST--
CRUDE?
WELL...
AHH, IT'S ALL RIGHT. I KNOW WHO I AM. BUT YOU SEE, THAT'S MY PERSONAL LIFE, AND *THIS* -- THIS IS SCIENCE.
AND I AM, AFTER ALL, A SCIENTIST.


WELL, ANYWAY, I STILL NEED SOME HELP WITH THAT.
OH, RIGHT. THAT'S WHY YOU CAME TO SEE ME IN THE FIRST PLACE.
TELL YOU WHAT, PHIL-- I CAN CALL YOU PHIL, RIGHT? LET'S HEAD OVER TO DR. PAYNE'S AND SEE WHAT'S WHAT.
"DR. PAYNE?"
"THAT'S WHAT I CALL HIM. YOU'LL SEE WHY."
HEY, DOC!
DAMN.
WHAT'S THE HOLD-UP? WHERE'S ANDY?
YOU KNOW YOU AREN'T SUPPOSED TO BE SMOKING IN HERE, DR. NORDLING.

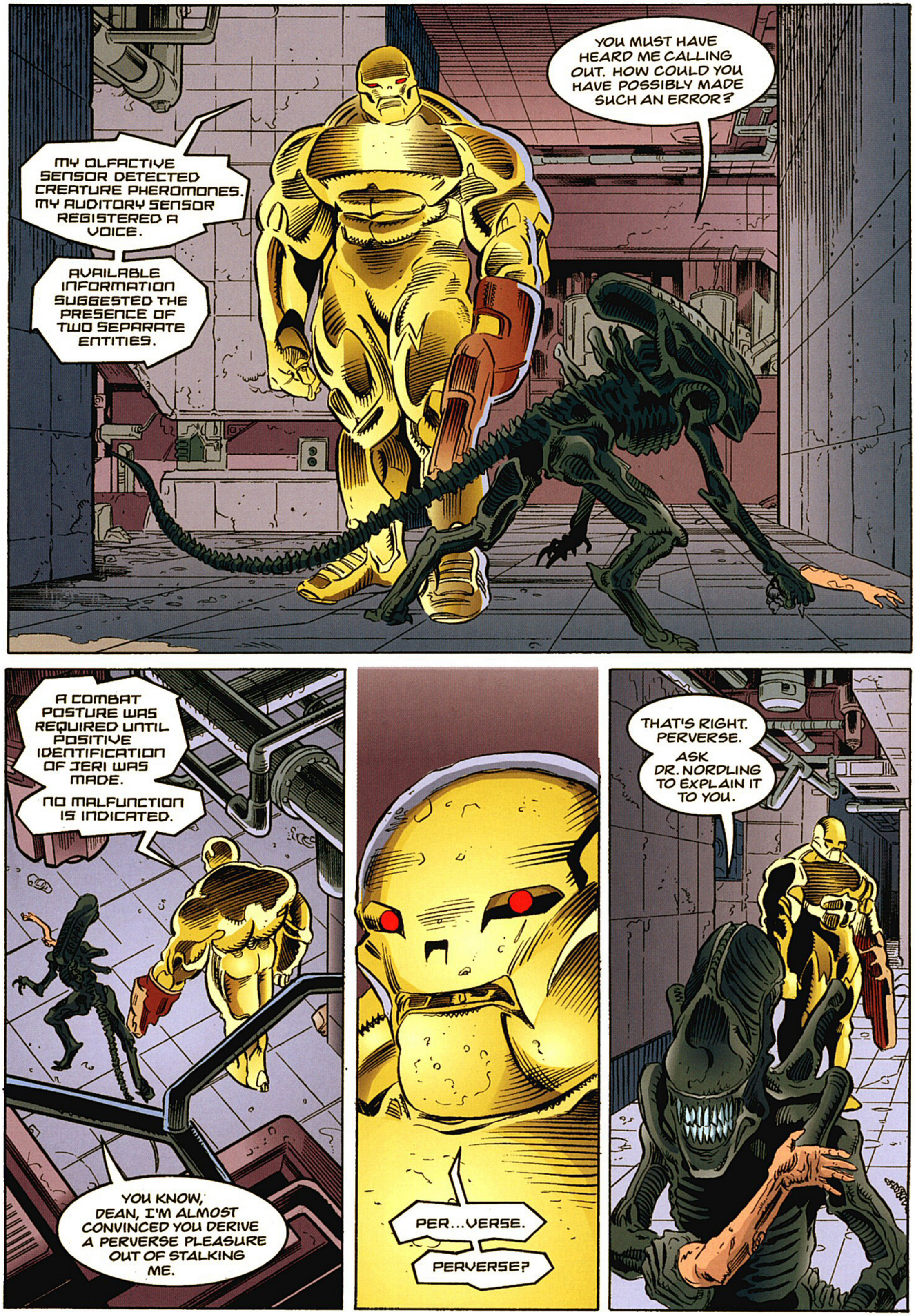
YEAH, LIKE I COULD STAND TO BE AROUND *THAT* WITHOUT A BURNING STOGIE UNDER MY NOSE.
THE FACT IS, YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE HERE AT ALL. YOU COULD HAVE CALLED ME ON THE INTERCOM.
SURE. AND YOU COULD IGNORE ME, JUST LIKE YOU ALWAYS DO.
SO WHAT'S THE STORY WITH ANDY? ALL YOU HAD TO DO WAS REPLACE AN EYE.
BELIEVE IT OR NOT, YESTERDAY'S HIVE DISASTER HAS ME A BIT BACKED UP.
LOOK, WE REALLY NEED ANDY IN THE LAB. COULD YOU HURRY IT UP?
UNLIKE THE OTHERS, I WASN'T PROGRAMMED TO RESPOND TO YOUR CONCERNS, DR. NORDLING.
MY SOLE FUNCTION HERE IS TO EFFECT REPARATIONS ON MY FELLOW SYNTHETICS.


ALL RIGHT, YOU SMART-MOUTHED BASTARD. FUN'S OVER.
NOW YOU GET ANDY OUT HERE AND POP A NEW EYE INTO HIS HEAD, OR I'LL BURN YOUR EYES RIGHT THE *#@ OUT OF YOURS!
DR. NORDLING, WHAT THE HELL HAS GOTTEN INTO YOU!?
AW, COME OFF IT! IT'S NOT LIKE HE'S HUMAN, FOR GOD'S SAKE.
DON'T EXPEND YOUR ENERGIES DEFENDING ME, DR. STRUNK.
WHAT!?
IT WAS A NICE GESTURE ON YOUR PART, BUT THE FACT IS, DR. NORDLING WOULD NEVER HARM ME, LEAST OF ALL MY EYES.
YOU SEE, ONLY I CAN REPAIR ALL OF THESE DAMAGED SYNTHETICS.
WITHOUT ME, THIS FACILITY WOULD SHUT DOWN IMMEDIATELY.
I KNOW DR. NORDLING WOULDN'T WANT THAT.

"PAYNE" IN THE BUTT.
AHH, FINALLY, SOME MOVEMENT!
COME ON. WE'LL ROUND UP JERI. HE'LL BE ABLE TO HELP YOU.
NO HE WON'T.
WHAT?!
AN ARM WAS MISSING FROM ONE OF LAST NIGHT'S CASUALTIES.
SINCE ARMS ARE TAILOR-MADE, I SENT JERI BACK INTO THE HIVE TO FIND IT.
I TOLD HIM THAT IF HE COULDN'T FIND IT IN THE HIVE --

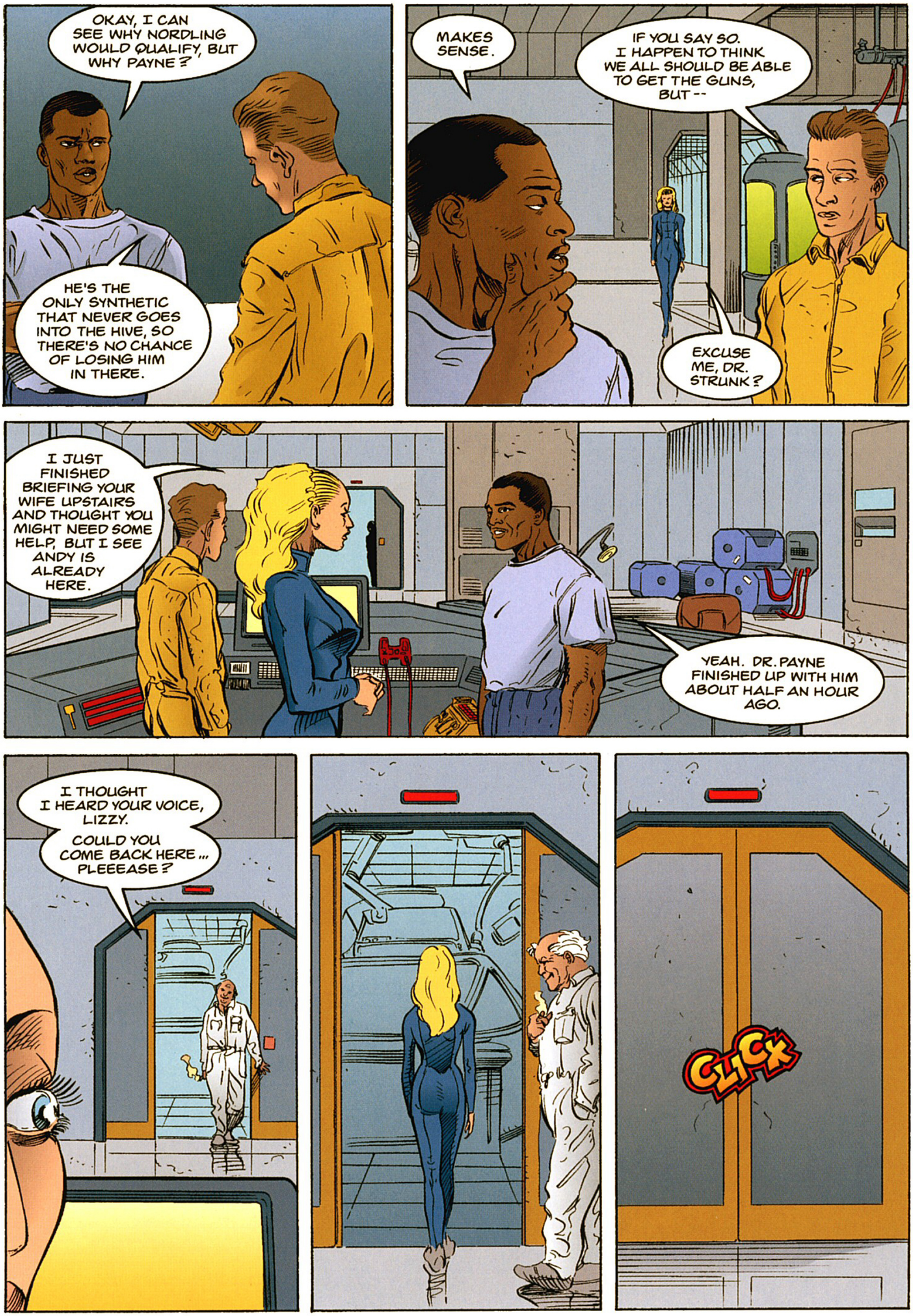
"--HE WOULD HAVE TO GO DOWN BELOW."
DEAN.
HEY, DEAN, IT'S JUST ME, SO DON'T SHOOT.
THIS IS NOT RIGHT. DEAN SHOULD BE ON HIS PLATFORM. HE'S NOT SUPPOSED TO MOVE AROUND ON HIS OWN DOWN HERE. I DON'T LIKE IT.
AH, THERE'S THE ARM.
EASY ENOUGH.
NOW TO GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE --

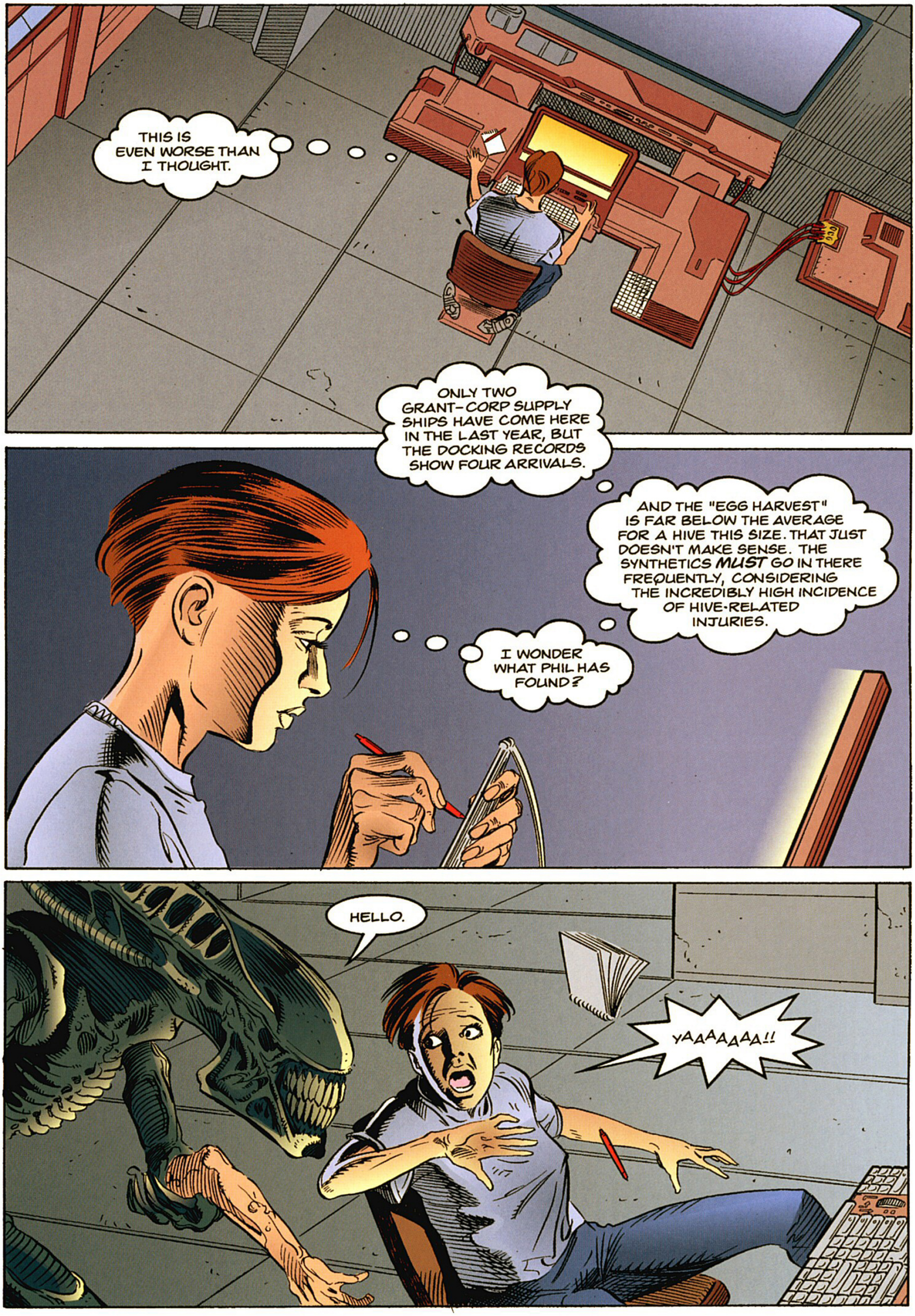
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! IT'S ME, IT'S JERI!
CAN YOU HEAR ME? IT'S JERI.
TARGET: ALIEN CREATURE?
EVIDENCE: TARGET SPEAKS.
CONCLUSION: TARGET IS SYNTHETIC CREATURE JERI.
IDENTIFICATION CONFIRMED. YOU MAY PASS.
I SHOULD HOPE SO! ARE YOU MAL-FUNCTIONING, OR WHAT?!

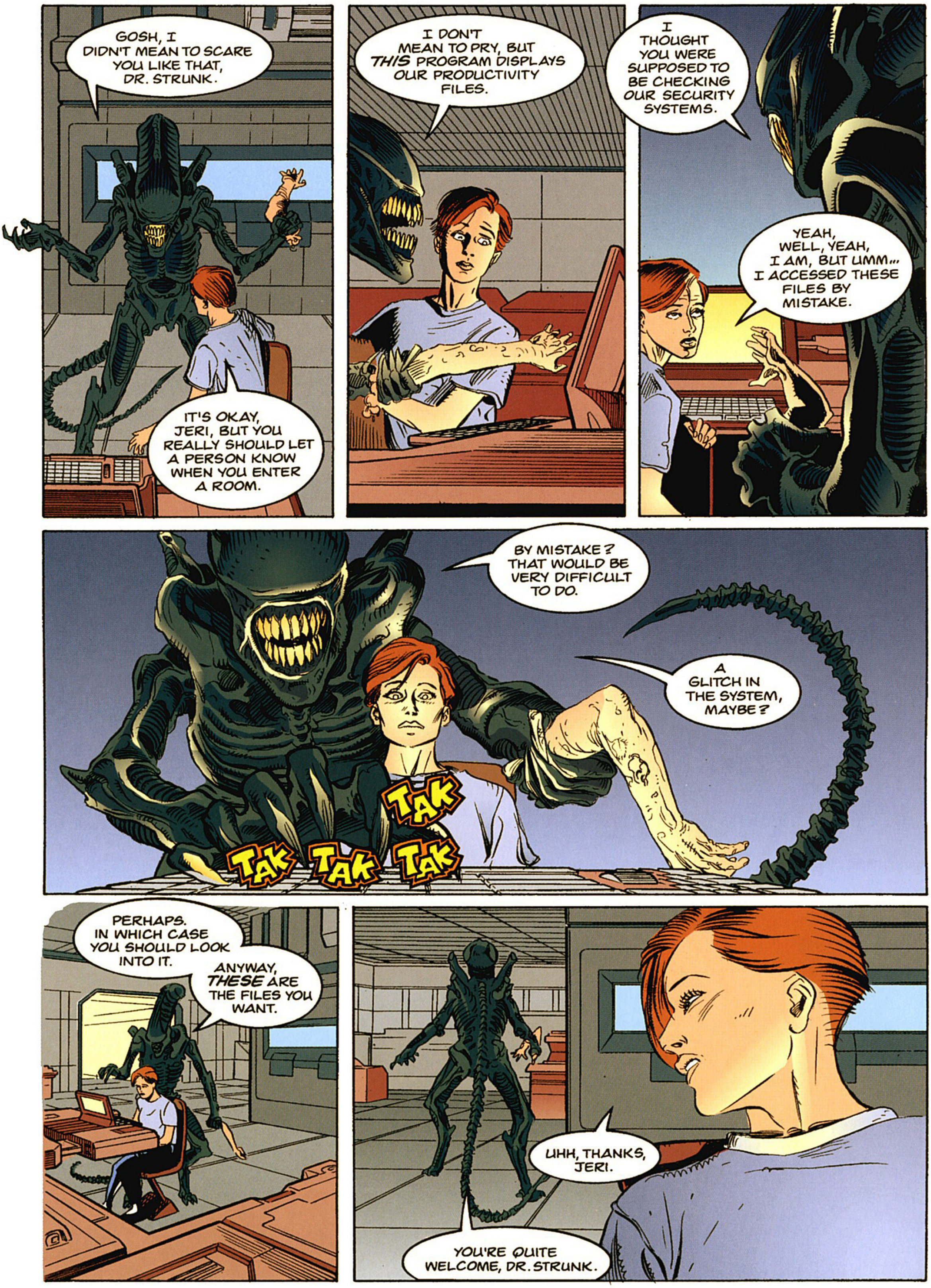

YOU MUST HAVE HEARD ME CALLING OUT. HOW COULD YOU HAVE POSSIBLY MADE SUCH AN ERROR?
MY OLFACTIVE SENSOR DETECTED CREATURE PHEROMONES. MY AUDITORY SENSOR REGISTERED A VOICE.
AVAILABLE INFORMATION SUGGESTED THE PRESENCE OF TWO SEPARATE ENTITIES.
A COMBAT POSTURE WAS REQUIRED UNTIL POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION OF JERI WAS MADE.
NO MALFUNCTION IS INDICATED.
YOU KNOW, DEAN, I'M ALMOST CONVINCED YOU DERIVE A PERVERSE PLEASURE OUT OF STALKING ME.
PER...VERSE.
PERVERSE?
THAT'S RIGHT. PERVERSE.
ASK DR. NORDLING TO EXPLAIN IT TO YOU.

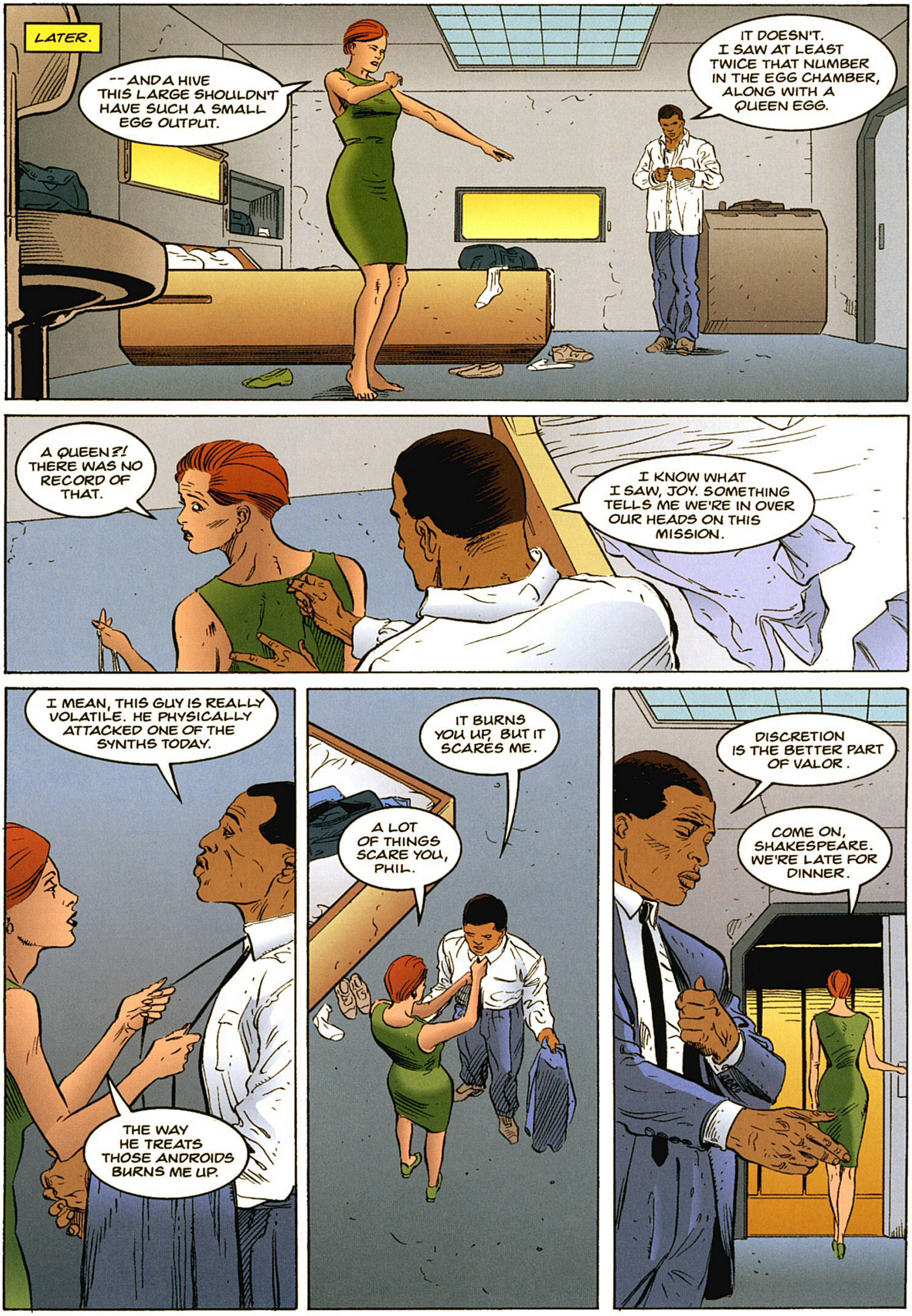
THIS CHAMBER IS ONE LEVEL BELOW US.
WOW! THAT'S A CLEAR PICTURE.
I MEAN, I CAN ALMOST READ THE L.C.D. DISPLAYS ON THE TIMER CLAMPS.
WHICH REMINDS ME, THE CLAMPS ARE NOT MONITORED BY THIS PROGRAM, ONLY THE CHAMBER'S PERIMETER.
HEY, IS THAT A QUEEN'S EGG?
UHH, IT SURE LOOKS LIKE ONE.

THIS IS A CLEVER PROGRAM. MOST PEOPLE CONSIDER SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS AND SYSTEMIC SECURITY MONITORS AS SEPARATE BRANCHES OF A CHECKS AND BALANCES SYSTEM.
BUT YOU'VE COMBINED THEM INTO A VERY EFFECTIVE UNIT.
ALL OUR PROGRAMS ARE LIKE THAT. I'LL SHOW YOU.
LET'S SUPPOSE WE WANT TO SEE OUR WEAPONS CASE.
TAKE A LOOK AT THE SCREEN NOW.
THAT'S A LOT OF GUNS.
THERE ARE A LOT OF CREATURES HERE.
SINCE THIS IS PART OF THE SECURITY PROGRAM, I TAKE IT NOT EVERYONE HAS ACCESS TO THESE WEAPONS?
NO. THE LOCK TO THE CASE RESPONDS TO THE PALM PRINTS OF ONLY DR. NORDLING AND DR. PAYNE.


OKAY, I CAN SEE WHY NORDLING WOULD QUALIFY, BUT WHY PAYNE?
HE'S THE ONLY SYNTHETIC THAT NEVER GOES INTO THE HIVE, SO THERE'S NO CHANCE OF LOSING HIM IN THERE.
MAKES SENSE.
IF YOU SAY SO. I HAPPEN TO THINK WE ALL SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET THE GUNS, BUT --
EXCUSE ME, DR. STRUNK?
I JUST FINISHED BRIEFING YOUR WIFE UPSTAIRS AND THOUGHT YOU MIGHT NEED SOME HELP, BUT I SEE ANDY IS ALREADY HERE.
YEAH. DR. PAYNE FINISHED UP WITH HIM ABOUT HALF AN HOUR AGO.
I THOUGHT I HEARD YOUR VOICE, LIZZY.
COULD YOU COME BACK HERE... PLEEEASE?
CLICK


THIS IS EVEN WORSE THAN I THOUGHT.
ONLY TWO GRANT-CORP SUPPLY SHIPS HAVE COME HERE IN THE LAST YEAR, BUT THE DOCKING RECORDS SHOW FOUR ARRIVALS.
AND THE "EGG HARVEST" IS FAR BELOW THE AVERAGE FOR A HIVE THIS SIZE. THAT JUST DOESN'T MAKE SENSE. THE SYNTHETICS MUST GO IN THERE FREQUENTLY, CONSIDERING THE INCREDIBLY HIGH INCIDENCE OF HIVE-RELATED INJURIES.
I WONDER WHAT PHIL HAS FOUND?
HELLO.
YAAAAAAA!!


GOSH, I DIDN'T MEAN TO SCARE YOU LIKE THAT, DR. STRUNK.
IT'S OKAY, JERI, BUT YOU REALLY SHOULD LET A PERSON KNOW WHEN YOU ENTER A ROOM.
I DON'T MEAN TO PRY, BUT *THIS* PROGRAM DISPLAYS OUR PRODUCTIVITY FILES.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE CHECKING OUR SECURITY SYSTEMS.
YEAH, WELL, YEAH, I AM, BUT UMM... I ACCESSED THESE FILES BY MISTAKE.
BY MISTAKE? THAT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT TO DO.
A GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM, MAYBE?
TAK
TAK TAK TAK
PERHAPS. IN WHICH CASE YOU SHOULD LOOK INTO IT.
ANYWAY, *THESE* ARE THE FILES YOU WANT.
UHH, THANKS, JERI.
YOU'RE QUITE WELCOME, DR. STRUNK.


LATER.
--AND A HIVE THIS LARGE SHOULDN'T HAVE SUCH A SMALL EGG OUTPUT.
IT DOESN'T. I SAW AT LEAST TWICE THAT NUMBER IN THE EGG CHAMBER, ALONG WITH A QUEEN EGG.
A QUEEN?! THERE WAS NO RECORD OF THAT.
I KNOW WHAT I SAW, JOY. SOMETHING TELLS ME WE'RE IN OVER OUR HEADS ON THIS MISSION.
I MEAN, THIS GUY IS REALLY VOLATILE. HE PHYSICALLY ATTACKED ONE OF THE SYNTHS TODAY.
THE WAY HE TREATS THOSE ANDROIDS BURNS ME UP.
IT BURNS YOU UP, BUT IT SCARES ME.
A LOT OF THINGS SCARE YOU, PHIL.
DISCRETION IS THE BETTER PART OF VALOR.
COME ON, SHAKESPEARE. WE'RE LATE FOR DINNER.

THANK YOU, JERI.
NO. NO MORE FOR ME. I THINK I'VE ALREADY HAD ENOUGH.
YES, DR. STRUNK.
NOT BAD FOR A SPACE MEAL, EH?
I MEAN, SURE, WE'RE EATING RE-HYDRATED BEEF AND GRAVY --
BUT THE WINE IS VERY REAL.
HEH HEH HEH.
GEE, YOU TWO ARE AWFULLY QUIET.

FEELING A BIT DOWN, IS THAT IT?
SAY, MAYBE YOU'D LIKE TO SEE JERI SMOKE ANOTHER ONE OF THESE?
NO WE WOULDN'T! IN FACT, DR. NORDLING, I DON'T LIKE THE WAY YOU TREAT THE SYNTHETICS.
IT'S ABSOLUTELY UNCONSCIONABLE.
EASY.
THEY MAY NOT BE HUMANS, BUT THEY DO HAVE DIGNITY--
THAT IS, UNTIL THEY WORK WITH YOU.
LISTEN, DR. NORDLING I'M SORRY--
NO!
I'M THE ONE WHO IS SORRY.
YOUR WIFE IS RIGHT. MY BEHAVIOR HAS BEEN TERRIBLE.
I'VE BEEN ACTING LIKE THIS FOR SO LONG, I DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT ANYMORE.
IT TOOK AN OUTSIDE OBSERVER TO WAKE ME UP TO WHAT I'M DOING.
JU-JUST SO'S YOU'RE NOT MAD...
I-I DON'T FEEL WELL.

I MAY ACT AS IF IT DOESN'T BOTHER ME --
BUT THE TRUTH IS, LIVING OUT HERE FOR SO LONG WITHOUT ANOTHER HUMAN AROUND CAN DRIVE A GUY, WELL --
A LITTLE CRAZY.
A LITTLE CRAZY.
PHIL!
CHHHHHH
A LITTLE CRAZY.
CRASH
A LITTLE CRAZY.
PHIL.
A LITTLE CRAZY.
PHIILLLL...

PH-PHIL? PHIL? YOU OKAY?

NORDLIIING!!!
OH, GOD, PLEASE ...

SPLAT
YOU MUST BE IN A STATE OF SHOCK, DR. STRUNK, BUT I'LL HAVE TO ASK YOU TO GATHER YOUR WITS.
RRRRRIPP!
YOU SEE, ONCE THE MATURE CREATURES SMELL THE ALARM PHEROMONES GIVEN OFF BY THAT LARVA I JUST KILLED, THEY'LL COME HERE IN DROVES.

HOLD ON A SECOND, BUDDY!
NOT NOW, DOCTOR, THERE ISN'T ANY TIME!
THEN YOU'D BETTER FIND SOME TIME, 'CAUSE I WANT SOME ANSWERS -- NOW!
HEY!

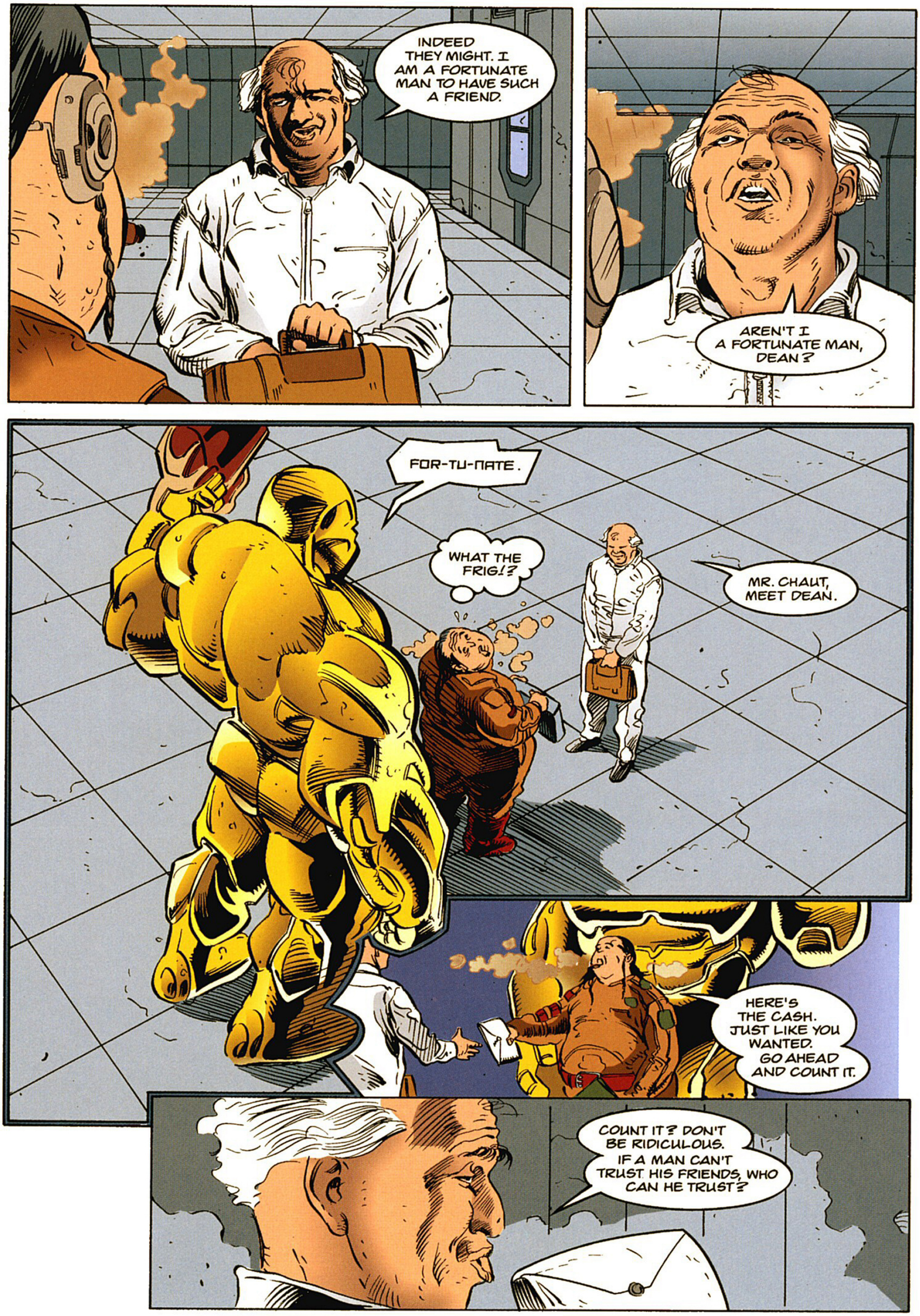
WHOOA!
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
KLAANG

DR. STRUNK, YOU MAY THINK YOURSELF A STRONG-MINDED INDIVIDUAL--
BUT THE FACT IS, YOU'RE VERY DIFFICULT TO DEAL WITH.
PHIL, HONEY? YOU OKAY?
YEH. FINE.
LOOK, MAYBE I SHOULD BE THANKING YOU, AND MAYBE NOT, BECAUSE NORDLING COULDN'T HAVE PUT US IN THERE HIMSELF.
AN ANDROID HAD TO HAVE DONE IT, AND SINCE YOU WERE SPYING ON ME IN THE MONITOR ROOM, WHY NOT YOU?
SPYING ON YOU? I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU HAD MADE AN ERROR IN YOUR FILE SEARCH.
I ONLY SOUGHT TO HELP YOU, AS MY PROGRAMMING DICTATES.
WHICH IS WHY I COULD NOT HAVE PUT YOU IN THE HIVE. MY PRIME DIRECTIVE FORBIDS ME FROM EVER PLACING A HUMAN IN ANY DANGER.
IN FACT, I *MUST* ALWAYS AID HUMANS, AS I'VE JUST DEMONSTRATED.
ASSUMING YOU'RE OKAY, THAT DOESN'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT NORDLING *DID NOT* PUT US IN THAT HIVE HIMSELF.
CLEARLY, THIS "HUMANS FIRST" PROGRAMMING HAS BEEN ALTERED IN ONE, OR MORE, OF THE SYNTHETICS.

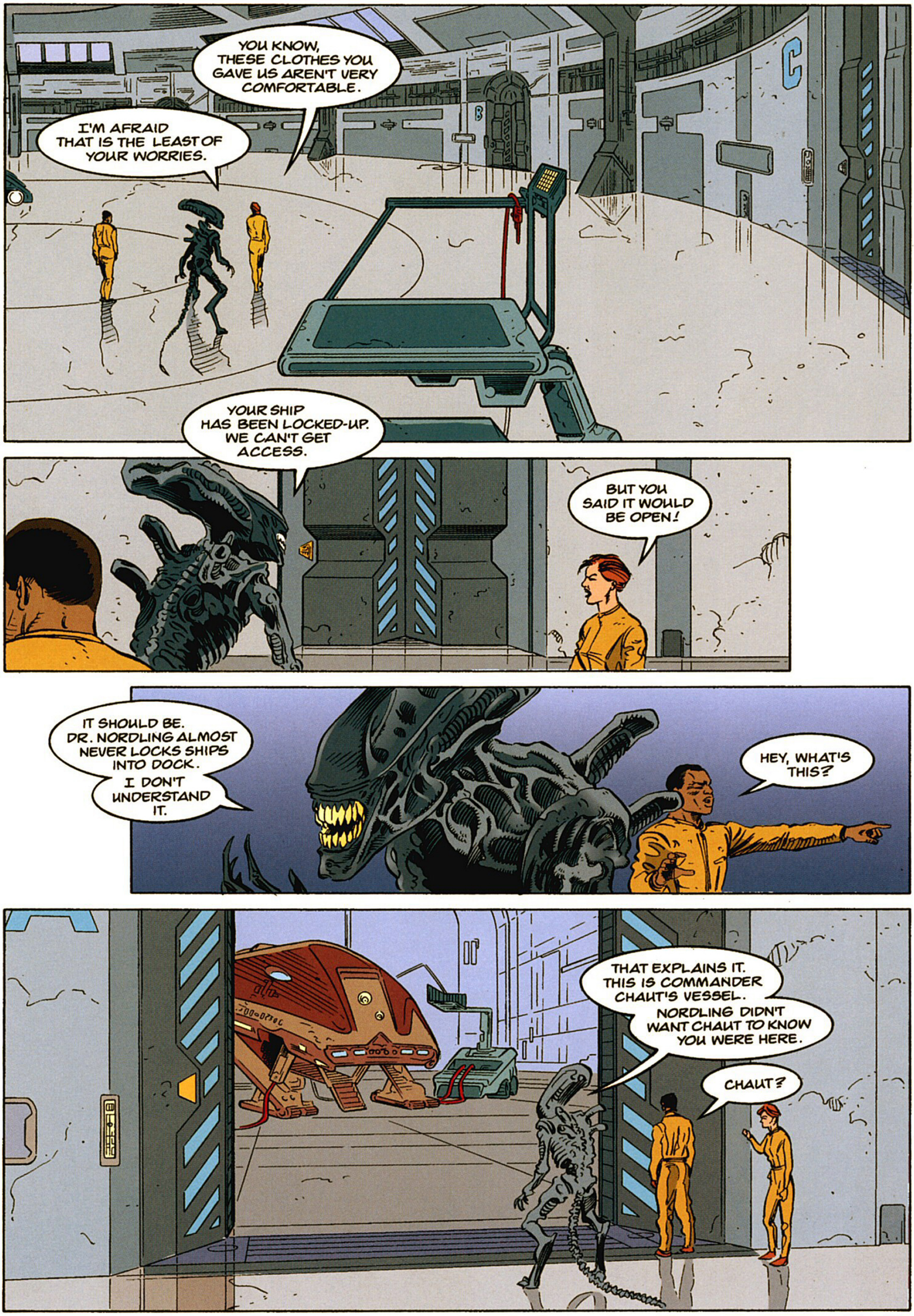
MY GUESS IS NORDLING DID SOME "CYBER-SURGERY TO ACHIEVE THAT END.
HOLD ON A SECOND.
NORDLING'S BRILLIANT, NO DOUBT ABOUT THAT, BUT OUR FILES SHOW HIS EXCLUSIVE FIELD IS BIOCHEMISTRY.
OUR FILES DON'T KNOW EVERY-THING.
TRUE ENOUGH, BUT I LEARNED THIS MORNING IN THE SYNTH REPAIR LAB THAT CYBERNETICS ISN'T NORDLING'S BAG.
HE COULDN'T HAVE REPROGRAMMED A SYNTH ON HIS OWN.
HE WOULD'VE NEEDED SOME HELP.
HELP? NOW THERE'S A DAMN GOOD IDEA.
JERI, IF YOU REALLY WANT TO PROVE YOU'RE ONE OF THE "GOOD GUYS," FIND US SOME MORE HELP.
"BECAUSE I THINK WE'RE GOING TO NEED ALL WE CAN GET."

LOOK, I KNOW YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE, BESIDES NORDLING, WHO CAN GET INTO THE WEAPONS CASE. WE NEED YOUR HELP.
I CAN'T DO IT.
WHY NOT?
IF I GET YOU THOSE WEAPONS, YOU'LL USE THEM TO HURT, MAYBE KILL, DR. NORDLING.
THAT WOULD BE IN VIOLATION OF MY PROGRAMMING.
THAT BASTARD TRIED TO KILL US!!
I RECOGNIZE THAT, BUT YOU MUST UNDERSTAND, VOLITION DOES NOT ENTER INTO THIS. I AM TRULY *UNABLE* TO COMPLY WITH YOUR REQUEST.
LOOK, ALL WE WANT IS TO GET OUT OF HERE. WHAT IF WE PROMISE NOT TO HURT--
JOY, FORGET IT.
CAN WE POSSIBLY BREAK INTO THAT WEAPONS CASE?
NO. IT WAS BUILT TO WITHSTAND AN ATTACK BY THE CREATURES.
BUT PERHAPS I CAN MAKE ANOTHER SUGGESTION.

NOT TOO FAR AWAY...
AND YOU'RE SURE THAT'S A QUEEN EGG?
OF COURSE I'M SURE.
YEAH, WELL, I GUESS YOU WOULD BE.
LET'S GET DOWN TO IT.
ZZZZIIIP
YOU KNOW, DR. NORDLING, IT'S A GOOD THING FOR YOU WE'RE FRIENDS.
IS THAT SO?
I MEAN, YOU AIN'T GOT MUCH SECURITY HERE.
SOME GUYS, ONCE THEY GOT WHAT THEY WANTED, WELL, SOME OF 'EM MIGHT TRY TO FIND A WAY AROUND PAYING YOU.


INDEED THEY MIGHT. I AM A FORTUNATE MAN TO HAVE SUCH A FRIEND.
AREN'T I A FORTUNATE MAN, DEAN?
FOR-TU-NATE.
WHAT THE FRIG!?
MR. CHAUT, MEET DEAN.
HERE'S THE CASH. JUST LIKE YOU WANTED. GO AHEAD AND COUNT IT.
COUNT IT? DON'T BE RIDICULOUS. IF A MAN CAN'T TRUST HIS FRIENDS, WHO CAN HE TRUST?

BY THE WAY, I HAVE SOMETHING FOR YOU, TOO.
OH, NO! YOU REALLY DON'T HAVE TO GIVE ME ANYTHING.
WELL, IT'S REALLY MORE A GIFT TO MYSELF.
I REALLY CAN'T STAND THE SMELL OF THAT PROCESSED TOBACCO IN YOUR CIGARS.
THESE ARE GENUINE EARTH-GROWN.
DON'T OPEN THEM TILL YOU GET ON YOUR SHIP, OKAY?
THANKS, DOC. I-UH-I'LL DO THAT.
LISTEN, I BETTER GO CATCH UP WITH MY MEN.
THANKS AGAIN. SEE YOU ON THE NEXT TRIP, OKAY?
NICE MEETING YOU, DEAN.
REAL NICE.


YOU KNOW, THESE CLOTHES YOU GAVE US AREN'T VERY COMFORTABLE.
I'M AFRAID THAT IS THE LEAST OF YOUR WORRIES.
YOUR SHIP HAS BEEN LOCKED-UP. WE CAN'T GET ACCESS.
BUT YOU SAID IT WOULD BE OPEN!
IT SHOULD BE. DR. NORDLING ALMOST NEVER LOCKS SHIPS INTO DOCK.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT.
HEY, WHAT'S THIS?
THAT EXPLAINS IT. THIS IS COMMANDER CHAUT'S VESSEL.
NORDLING DIDN'T WANT CHAUT TO KNOW YOU WERE HERE.
CHAUT?

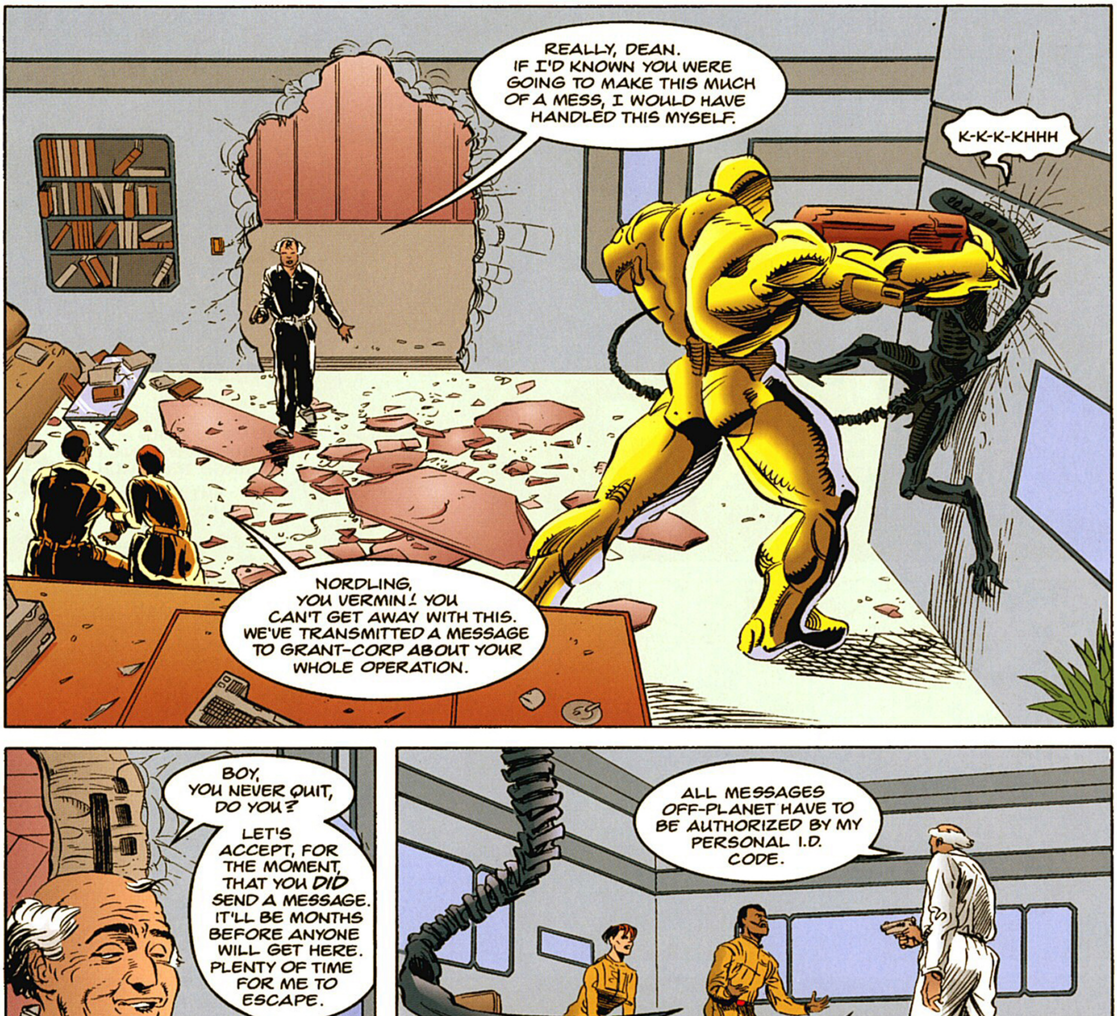
DON'T YOU KNOW HIM? GRANT-CORP SENDS HIM HERE PERIODICALLY TO PICK UP SOME OF THE CREATURES' EGGS.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? GRANT-CORP DOESN'T PICK UP EGGS.
OH MY GOD! DON'T YOU SEE IT, PHIL?
NORDLING IS SELLING THE EGGS ON THE BLACK MARKET!
OF COURSE. THAT'S WHY ALL THOSE EXTRA EGGS I SAW IN THE CHAMBERS WEREN'T RECORDED IN THE LOGS.
HE'S PROBABLY SELLING RESEARCH TOO, WHICH WOULD EXPLAIN SOME OF HIS EXTREME METHODS.
SO... CHAUT DOESN'T WORK FOR GRANT-CORP?
NO. HE'S A SMUGGLER, AND PROBABLY WORSE. WE'D BETTER GET MOVING.
WELL, WHAT HAVE WE GOT HERE?

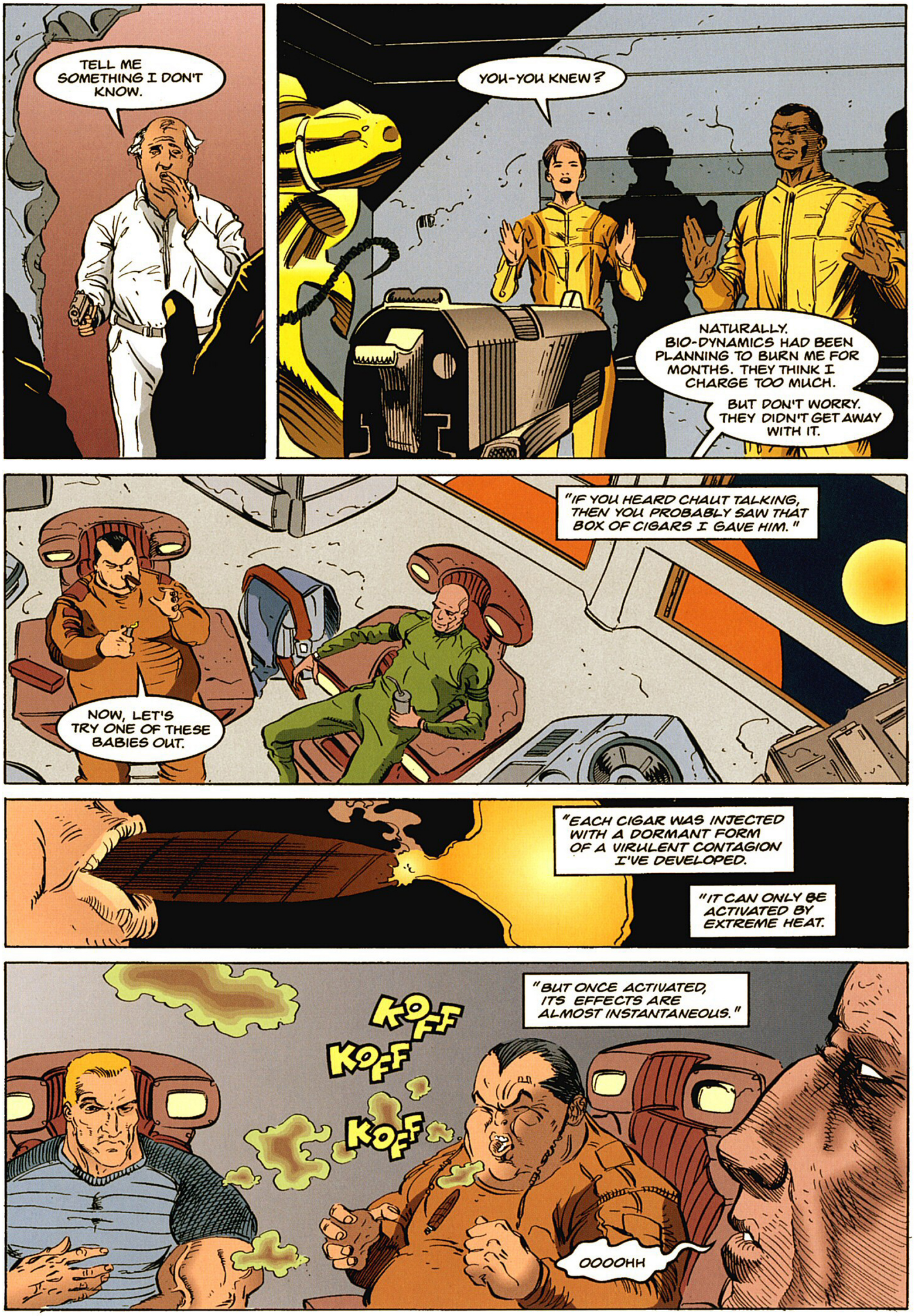
I'VE SEEN THIS SYNTH CREATURE BEFORE --
BUT NORDLING NEVER TOLD ME ABOUT YOU.
HE-HE DIDN'T?
LYING S.O.B. TOLD ME HE HAD ONLY ONE GIRL SYNTH HERE.
THANK GOD! HE DIDN'T HEAR US.
MAYBE HE JUST BUILT THIS ONE.
HEH HEH. HE DID A PRETTY GOOD JOB, THEN.
EXCUSE US SIR, BUT WE MUST FINISH CLEANING THE AIR PROCESSORS.
HOLD ON A SECOND!

MY FRIEND MOSE WASN'T HERE WITH ME LAST TIME WHEN NORDLING HAD YOU SMOKE THAT CIGAR FOR US.
HE'S JUST DYING TO SEE YOU DO IT.
PERFECT.
WE HAD BETTER HURRY ALONG, JERI.
YOU KNOW HOW ANGRY DR. NORDLING WOULD BE IF HE FOUND US PLAYING GAMES HERE.
SHE'S RIGHT, COMMANDER CHAUT. I REALLY MUST GO.
OKAY, BUT YOU KEEP THE CIGAR. CALL IT A GIFT.
ALL RIGHT. I'LL STORE IT.
THANK YOU.
THWIP!

WOW. D'YOU SEE THAT?!
HEY, WHY DID YOU GIVE HIM THAT NICE CIGAR?
YOU DON'T THINK I'D SMOKE IT AFTER THAT THING HAD IT IN ITS MOUTH.
'SIDES, I'M SURE IT'LL PISS NORDLING OFF WHEN HE SEES THAT SYNTH WITH ONE OF HIS "EARTH-GROWN" CIGARS.
ALTHOUGH NOT NEARLY AS MUCH AS WHEN HE FINDS OUT THAT WAS COUNTERFEIT CASH I GAVE HIM.
KEEP IT DOWN, MAN!! THOSE SYNTHS MIGHTA HEARD YOU!
AND WHAT IF THEY DID? THERE'S NO WAY NORDLING CAN STOP US NOW. C'MON.
DID YOU HEAR THAT? COUNTERFEIT!
DON'T WASTE ANY TIME ON NORDLING'S PROBLEMS.
"WE GOT PLENTY OF OUR OWN TO WORRY ABOUT."

VERY SOON...
I DON'T LIKE THIS, BEING IN NORDLING'S OFFICE. HE'S BOUND TO COME HERE.
IT COULD NOT BE HELPED. ALL THE CLASSIFIED SECURITY INFORMATION OF THIS COMPLEX IS STORED IN DR. NORDLING'S PERSONAL COMPUTER.
IT CANNOT BE ACCESSED BY ANY OF THE OTHER SYSTEMS.
WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO FREE YOUR SHIP FROM PORT WITHOUT THE COMBINATION TO YOUR DOCK, AND THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO GET IT.
OKAY, OKAY. JUST HURRY!
CRASH!
YAAA!
CLICK

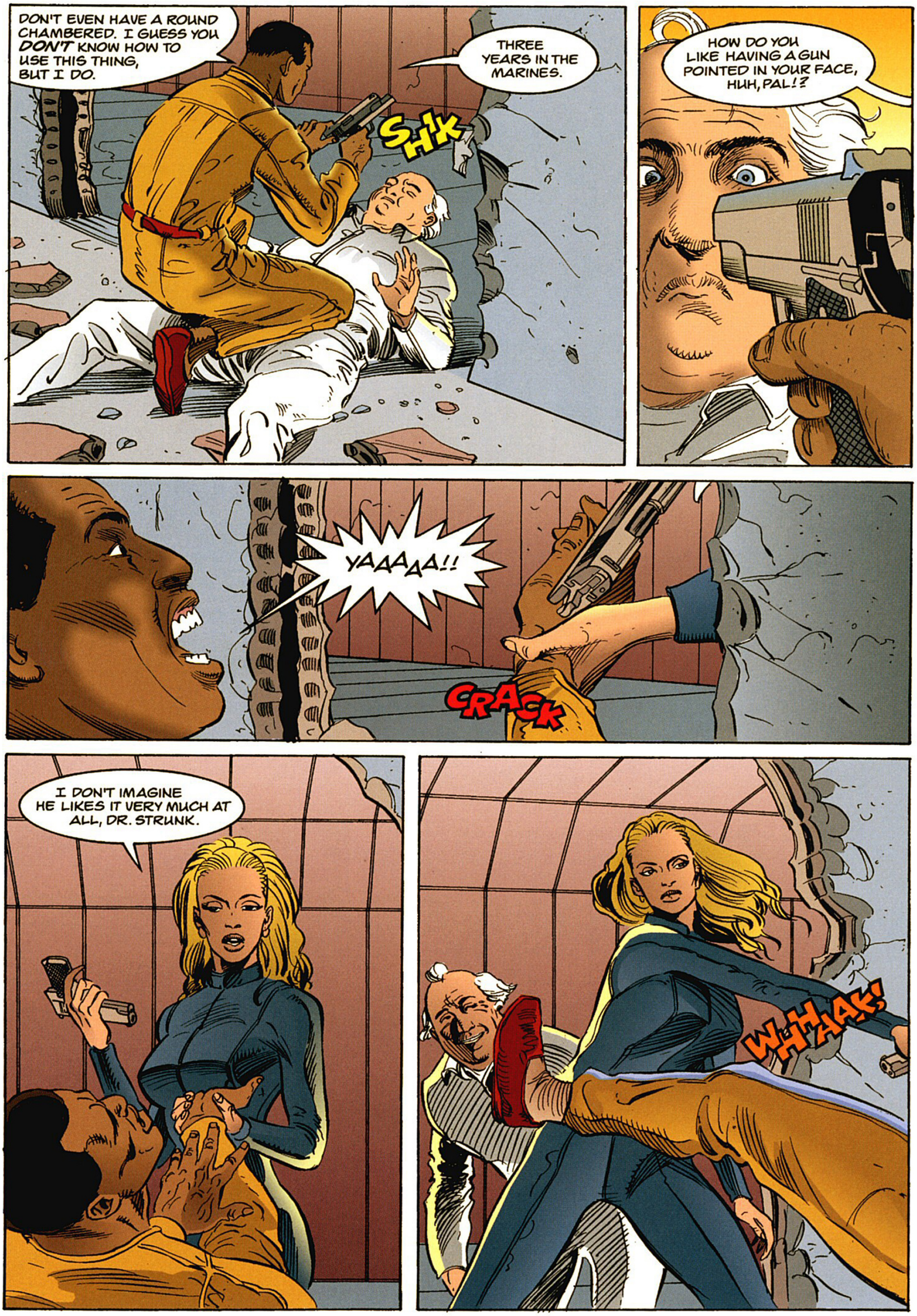

REALLY, DEAN. IF I'D KNOWN YOU WERE GOING TO MAKE THIS MUCH OF A MESS, I WOULD HAVE HANDLED THIS MYSELF.
K-K-K-KHHH
NORDLING, YOU VERMIN! YOU CAN'T GET AWAY WITH THIS. WE'VE TRANSMITTED A MESSAGE TO GRANT-CORP ABOUT YOUR WHOLE OPERATION.
BOY, YOU NEVER QUIT, DO YOU?
LET'S ACCEPT, FOR THE MOMENT, THAT YOU DID SEND A MESSAGE. IT'LL BE MONTHS BEFORE ANYONE WILL GET HERE. PLENTY OF TIME FOR ME TO ESCAPE.
BUT OF COURSE, YOU SENT NOTHING.
ALL MESSAGES OFF-PLANET HAVE TO BE AUTHORIZED BY MY PERSONAL I.D. CODE.
WITHOUT IT, YOU CAN'T REACH THE COMMUNICATIONS SUB-STATION IN THIS QUADRANT.
ALL RIGHT, SMART-ASS, YOU GOT US.
BUT YOU ALSO GOT SHAFTED ON YOUR DEAL WITH CHAUT.
THAT'S RIGHT. WE HEARD HIM SAY THE CASH HE GAVE YOU IS COUNTERFEIT.


TELL ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW.
YOU-YOU KNEW?
NATURALLY. BIO-DYNAMICS HAD BEEN PLANNING TO BURN ME FOR MONTHS. THEY THINK I CHARGE TOO MUCH.
BUT DON'T WORRY. THEY DIDN'T GET AWAY WITH IT.
"IF YOU HEARD CHAUT TALKING, THEN YOU PROBABLY SAW THAT BOX OF CIGARS I GAVE HIM."
NOW, LET'S TRY ONE OF THESE BABIES OUT.
"EACH CIGAR WAS INJECTED WITH A DORMANT FORM OF A VIRULENT CONTAGION I'VE DEVELOPED.
"IT CAN ONLY BE ACTIVATED BY EXTREME HEAT.
"BUT ONCE ACTIVATED, ITS EFFECTS ARE ALMOST INSTANTANEOUS."
KOFF
KOFF
KOFF
OOOOHH

"I WONDER IF CHAUT WILL FIGURE IT OUT?"
NOO...NOOD...LEEENG-G-G-G...
"FORTUNATELY FOR THOSE GUYS, IT'LL ALL BE OVER IN JUST A FEW MINUTES."

THE SHIP WILL PROBABLY BE LOST--
OR IF IT HAD A PREPROGRAMMED ITINERARY, THE FOLKS AT BIO-DYNAMICS WILL GET QUITE A SURPRISE WHEN IT PULLS INTO THEIR DOCK.
IN ANY CASE, I DON'T THINK THEY'LL EVER TRY TO SCREW ME AGAIN, DO YOU?
I THINK YOU'RE A COLD-BLOODED, LOWLIFE SCUMBAG.
AHH, WHO CARES WHAT YOU THINK?
I SWEAR, IF YOU HADN'T REWIRED THIS GIANT TO DO YOUR BIDDING, I'D RIP YOU LIMB FROM LIMB MYSELF!
SSS ME.
IT'S-S-S ME. JERI.
TARGET:
ALIEN CREATURE?
EVIDENCE:
TARGET SPEAKS.
CONCLUSION:
TARGET IS SYNTHETIC CREATURE JERI.

WHUMP!
JERI, ARE YOU--
DEAN HAS NOT BEEN "RE-WIRED." HE WAS MERELY FOLLOWING HIS ORIGINAL PROGRAMMING WHEN HE ATTACKED ME.
ARE YOU SURE?
HE RELEASED ME, DIDN'T HE? BESIDES WHICH, IF DR. NORDLING HAD A PLASMA-RIFLE-TOTING ANDROID AT HIS COMMAND--
--WHY WOULD HE NEED A HAND GUN?
ALL RIGHT, NOW. JUST WATCH YOURSELVES. I KNOW HOW TO USE THIS.
HAA!!!


DON'T EVEN HAVE A ROUND CHAMBERED. I GUESS YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO USE THIS THING, BUT I DO.
THREE YEARS IN THE MARINES.
SHIK
HOW DO YOU LIKE HAVING A GUN POINTED IN YOUR FACE, HUH, PAL!?
YAAAAA!!
CRACK
I DON'T IMAGINE HE LIKES IT VERY MUCH AT ALL, DR. STRUNK.
WHHAAK!

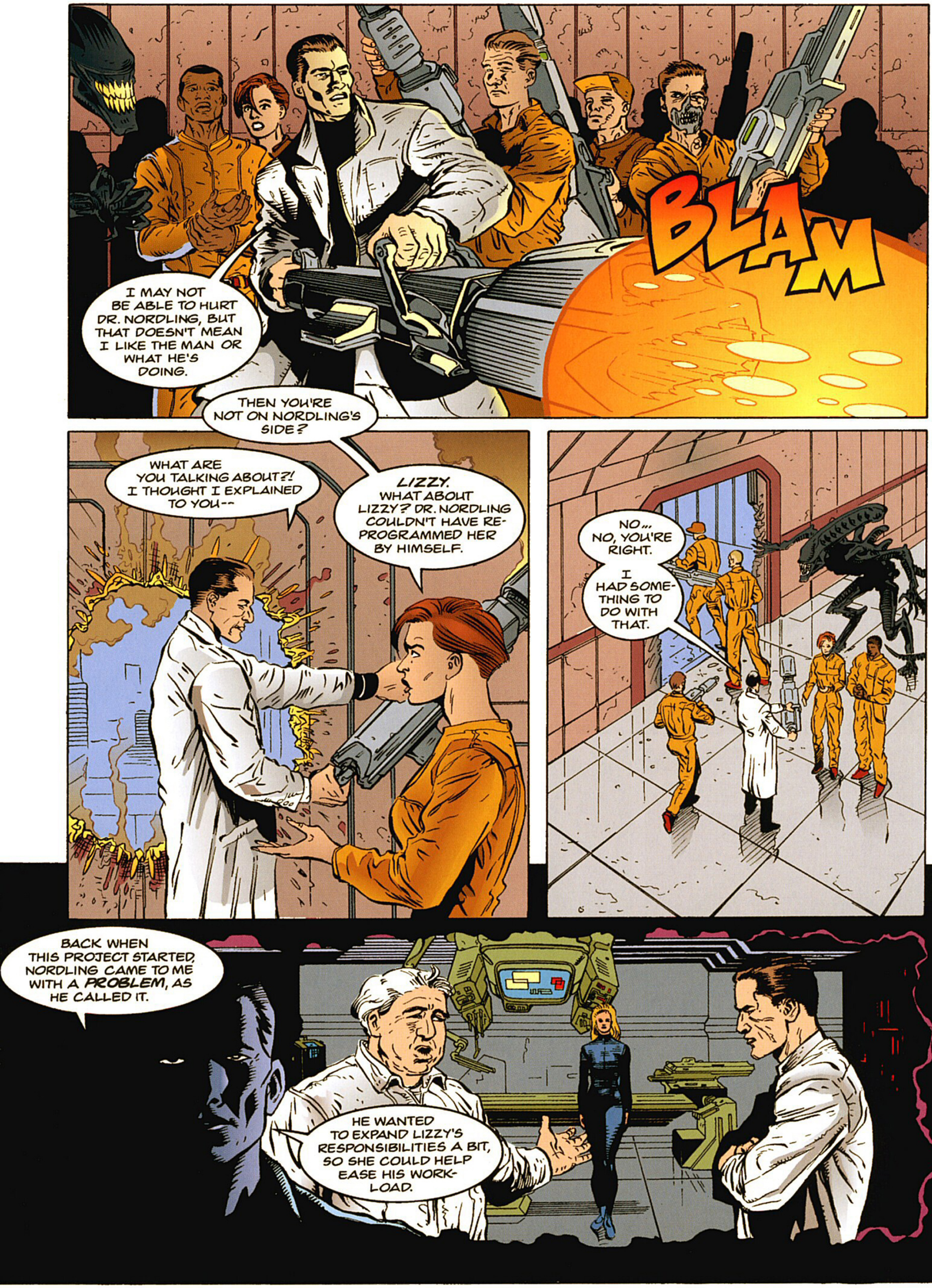
WHERE THE HELL HAVE YOU BEEN?
I WAS DESTROYING THE STRUNKS' FILES AND CLOTHES, JUST AS YOU DIRECTED ME TO DO.
WELL, FORGET THAT. JUST GET THEM OUTTA HERE.
OH, PHIL. IS IT--?
IT'S BROKEN ALL RIGHT.
YOU LIED TO ME, YOU--YOU TWISTED FA@#ING MACHINE!
WE'RE FINISHED. WHAT CAN WE POSSIBLY DO AGAINST A KILLER ROBOT?
YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING, DR. STRUNK.
YOU'RE ONLY HUMAN.

SLAAASH
SLICE!
YOU DIRTY BASTARDS! I'LL GET YOU FOR THIS!

QUICKLY, NOW. WE MUST GET OUT OF HERE.
"GET OUT OF HERE"?
WHERE THE FRIG YOU GONNA GO?! HA HA HA HA.
WHERE ARE WE GOING TO GO?
WE'LL MAKE A RIGHT AT THIS NEXT INTERSECTION. THAT WILL TAKE US TO THE MAIN LAB.
PERHAPS WE CAN FIND A WEAPON OF SOME SORT THERE.
ONLY ONE PROBLEM WITH THAT PLAN.
WHAT'S THAT?

WHAT IF SOMEONE GOT THERE AHEAD OF US?

DR. PAYNE! I DON'T UNDER-STAND...
I TH-- THOUGHT YOU WERE NEUTRAL.
NO. NOT NEUTRAL.
SHAAK
NOT QUITE.


BLAM
I MAY NOT BE ABLE TO HURT DR. NORDLING, BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN I LIKE THE MAN OR WHAT HE'S DOING.
THEN YOU'RE NOT ON NORDLING'S SIDE?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! I THOUGHT I EXPLAINED TO YOU--
LIZZY. WHAT ABOUT LIZZY? DR. NORDLING COULDN'T HAVE RE-PROGRAMMED HER BY HIMSELF.
NO... NO, YOU'RE RIGHT.
I HAD SOME-THING TO DO WITH THAT.
BACK WHEN THIS PROJECT STARTED, NORDLING CAME TO ME WITH A PROBLEM, AS HE CALLED IT.
HE WANTED TO EXPAND LIZZY'S RESPONSIBILITIES A BIT, SO SHE COULD HELP EASE HIS WORK-LOAD.

"OF COURSE, THIS WAS IN VIOLATION OF LIZZY'S ESTABLISHED FUNCTION PARAMETERS, BUT IT WAS WHAT MY PROGRAM RECOGNIZED AS A REASONABLE REQUEST.
"SO I SHOWED NORDLING HOW TO RESCIND SECURITY CODES AND RE-DEFINE LIZZY'S FUNCTION PARAMETERS.
"HE PICKED UP ON IT RATHER QUICKLY. I HADN'T PLANNED TO TEACH HIM VERY MUCH, BUT HUMANS HAVE A WAY OF SURPRISING YOU-- UH, THAT IS, ME.
"I LAID THE GROUNDWORK, AND HE EXTRAPOLATED THE REST."
IN THAT RESPECT, I'M GUIL--
BLAM
WHAT WAS THAT?!
IN HERE.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?!
BOOM
WE'RE PUTTING DR. NORDLING OUT OF BUSINESS.
I'M HEADING DOWN TO THE EGG CHAMBER.
SHHHKSW
STOP IT! STOP. THERE ARE VIRUS CULTURES IN THIS LAB.

RELAX, DR. STRUNK. ALL THE SYNTHETICS KNOW EXACTLY WHERE THE VIRUS CONTAINMENT UNITS ARE KEPT, AND THEY AREN'T ABOUT TO DAMAGE ANY.
IT'S AGAINST OUR PROGRAMMING TO ALLOW YOU TO COME TO HARM, REMEMBER?
OUR ONLY INTENTION IS TO ELIMINATE NORDLING'S CAPABILITIES TO CONTINUE IN HIS WAYS.
AND MAYBE GET HIM A LITTLE MAD, TOO.
HERE. I GOT THESE FROM ONE OF THE SYNTHS.
AAAAHHHHH— YOU @%#✱ING &%@#!S!!
THAT'S MY LIFE'S WORK— MY *LIFE'S* WORK!
I'LL KILL YOU FOR THIS!

TOUGH TALK FROM A DEAD MAN.
BRAKA BRAKA
NO!
WHAT THE HELL'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?!
I'M SORRY, SIR, BUT I CANNOT ALLOW ANY HARM TO COME TO ANY HUMAN BEING.
I AM UNABLE TO DISCRIMINATE. IT'S IN--
YEAH, YEAH, I KNOW--IT'S IN YOUR PROGRAMMING.
IN THE MEANTIME, THAT SCUMBAG IS GETTING AWAY.
GETTING AWAY TO WHERE? WE'RE INSIDE A CONTAINED ENVIRONMENT IN DEEP SPACE, AND THE TRANSPORTS ARE IN THE OTHER DIRECTION.
I ASSURE YOU, HE'S NOT GOING ANYWHERE--

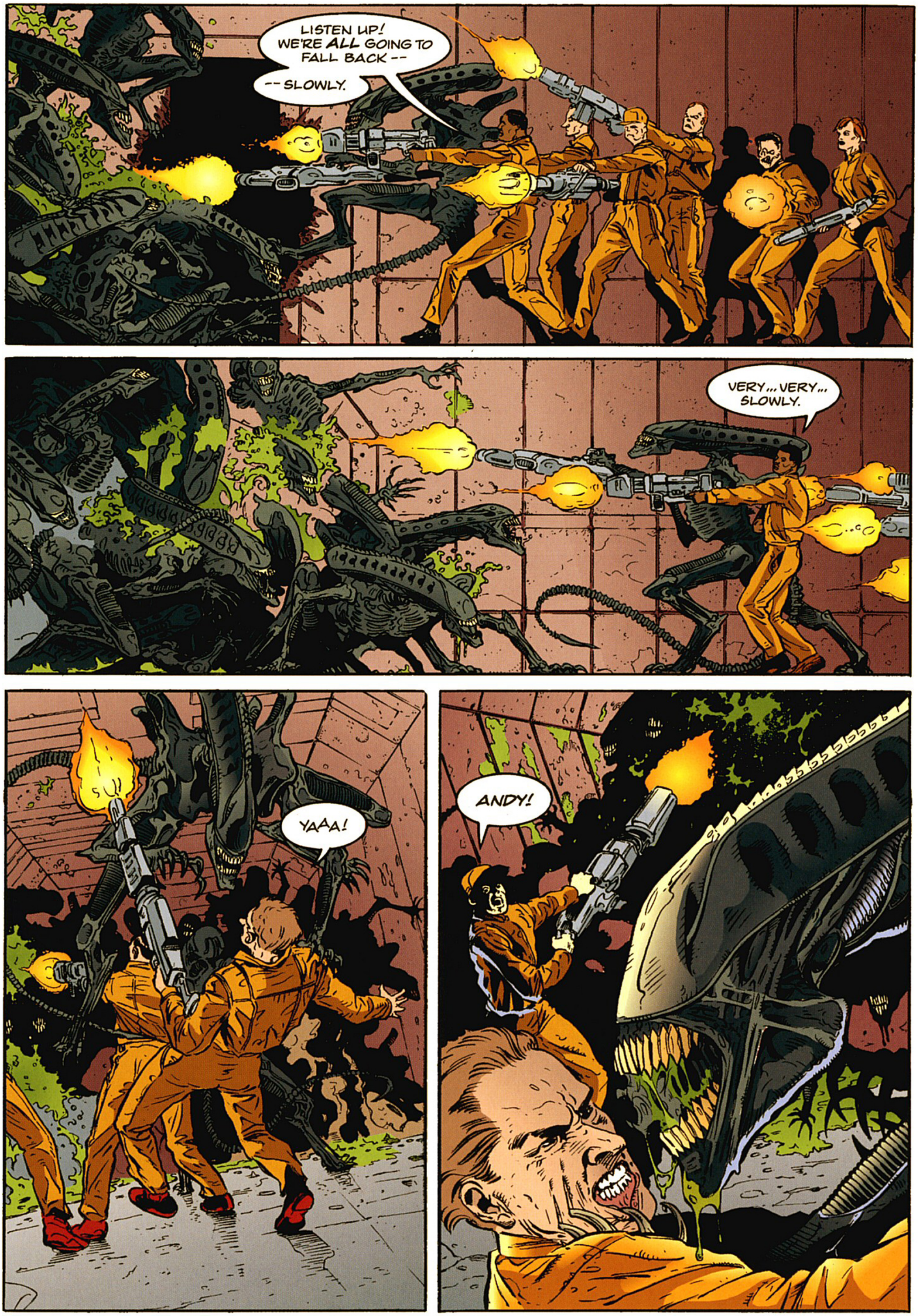
"NOT ANYWHERE YOU HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT."
C'MON, LIZZY. MOVE IT, WILL YOU?
DOCTOR...
LOWLIFE SYNTHS THINK THEY'VE GOT ME, BUT THEY'RE WRONG.
THEY JUST DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH OF A BASTARD I CAN REALLY BE, BUT THEY'RE GONNA FIND OUT.
CLACK-CLICKETY CLACK CLICK
DOCTOR NOR- NOR- NORDLING, I AM EXPERIENCING SECONDARY SYSTEM FAILURES.
AND YOU THINK I'M HAVING FUN HERE? JUST LET ME FINISH HERE, AND WE'LL SEE TO YOUR PROBLEMS, OKAY?
DOCTOR, THAT'S THE MANUAL OVERRIDE—
THAT'S RIGHT, LIZZY. THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT IT IS.

"I'VE ALSO SHUT OFF ALL THE DIVIDING DOORS THROUGHOUT THE COMPLEX. THERE'LL BE NOWHERE TO RUN.
"AND SINCE I'VE DISABLED THE ALARM SYSTEM THAT MONITORS AIR CHANGES IN THE STATION--
"--THE STRUNKS, PAYNE, AND ALL THE REST OF THOSE **TURNCOATS** WON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT'S COMING--
"--UNTIL IT'S ALREADY THERE."

OKAY NOW, DARLING. YOU TRY TO HOLD OUT JUST A LITTLE LONGER.
BUT, DOCTOR, WE CAN'T GET BACK TO THE TRANSPORTS FROM HERE NOW.
WHICH IS WHY WE'RE HEADING UP TO THE TOP LEVEL— WHERE THE EMERGENCY ESCAPE POD IS...
"MAKING A BRIEF STOP FOR MY MONEY, OF COURSE."
I STILL THINK WE SHOULD GO AFTER NORDLING.
WE SHALL, BUT FIRST, WE MUST ALERT THE AUTHORITIES.
SINCE YOUR ONBOARD TRANSMITTER IS THE ONLY MEANS OF COMMUNICATION ON-PLANET NOT CONTROLLED BY NORDLING'S SECURITY CODE, WE'LL NEED TO GAIN ACCESS TO YOUR SHIP.
THIS WEAPON SHOULD HELP US WITH THAT.
R-R-RUUUMBLLLE
WH- WHAT TH-THE F-F-F FRIG...?

OH NO!
NO USE TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW IT HAPPENED, JUST START SHOOTING!
UNLESS THERE'S SOMETHING "IN YOUR PROGRAMMING" ABOUT THESE THINGS, TOO!
IN FACT, THERE IS...
TOTAL EXTERMINATION!
BRAKA BRAKA BRAKA
BRAKA

YOU AND YOUR WIFE HAD BETTER RETREAT TO THE TRANSPORTS! WE WILL TRY TO HOLD THE CREATURES!
THAT SOUNDS DELIGHTFUL, BUT IF YOU LOSE TWO GUNS, YOU'LL LOSE THIS FIGHT!


LISTEN UP! WE'RE ALL GOING TO FALL BACK --
-- SLOWLY.
VERY... VERY... SLOWLY.
YAAA!
ANDY!

YOU'VE GOT TO BE MORE CARE-FUL.
BLAM
UHHF!
WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON BACK THERE?!
DON'T WORRY, SIR-- EVERY-THING'S UNDER CONTROL.
BLAM
UNDER CONTROL?!? LOOK AT YOU!
I cAn STill shoot a GUN, sIr.
SSS
SSS

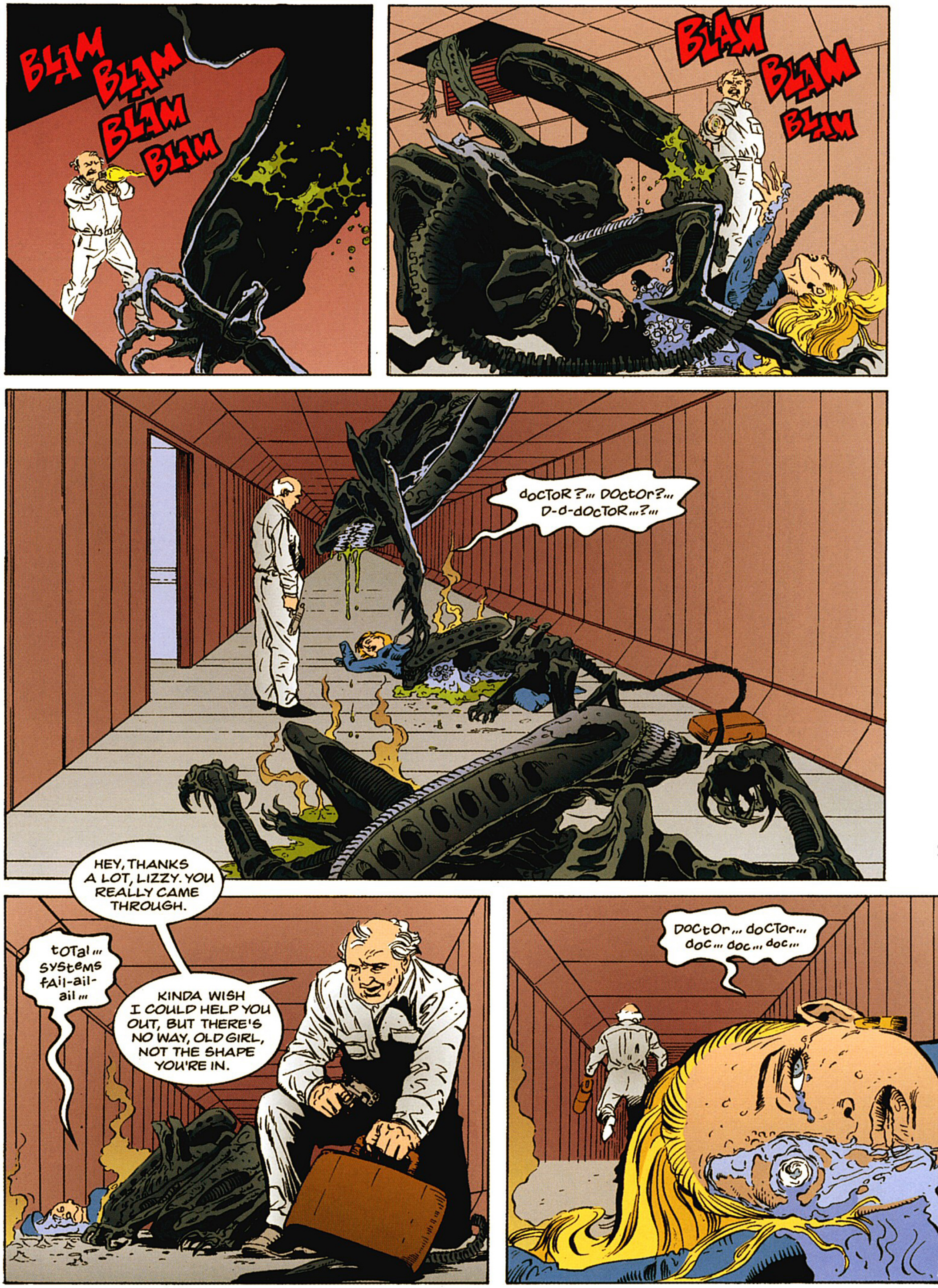
DAMN! DAMN! DAMN!
OUR DEFENSE IS FALLING APART!
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO ABOUT THEM?
ONLY ONE THING TO DO.
DIE.

CRR AASH
IT'S DEAN!
MASSIVE ALIEN CREATURE PRESENCE DETECTED WITHIN HUMAN ENVIRONMENT.
YEAH, NO KIDDING! WHY AREN'T YOU FIRING?!
PERMISSION TO DISCHARGE WEAPONRY WITHIN CONFINES OF SAID ENVIRONMENT.
HUH?
AS HUMANS, YOU AND YOUR WIFE ARE THE RANKING AUTHORITY HERE.
JUST TELL HIM "PERMISSION GRANTED"!

PERMISSION GRANTED!
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM

BOOM BOOM
WHOA HO! SOUNDS LIKE DEAN HAS JOINED THE FRAY.
WELL, THEY MAY JUST HAVE A CHANCE AFTER ALL.
AH, WHO CARES? I'VE GOT MY EMERGENCY STASH AND WE'LL BE OUTTA HERE IN A FEW MINUTES, RIGHT LIZZY?
DOCTOR, I REQUIRE FLUID INTAKE TO CONTINUE.
FUNCTIONS ERODING... GETTING WORSE --
GETTING WORSE -- GETTING WORSE -- GETTING WORSE --

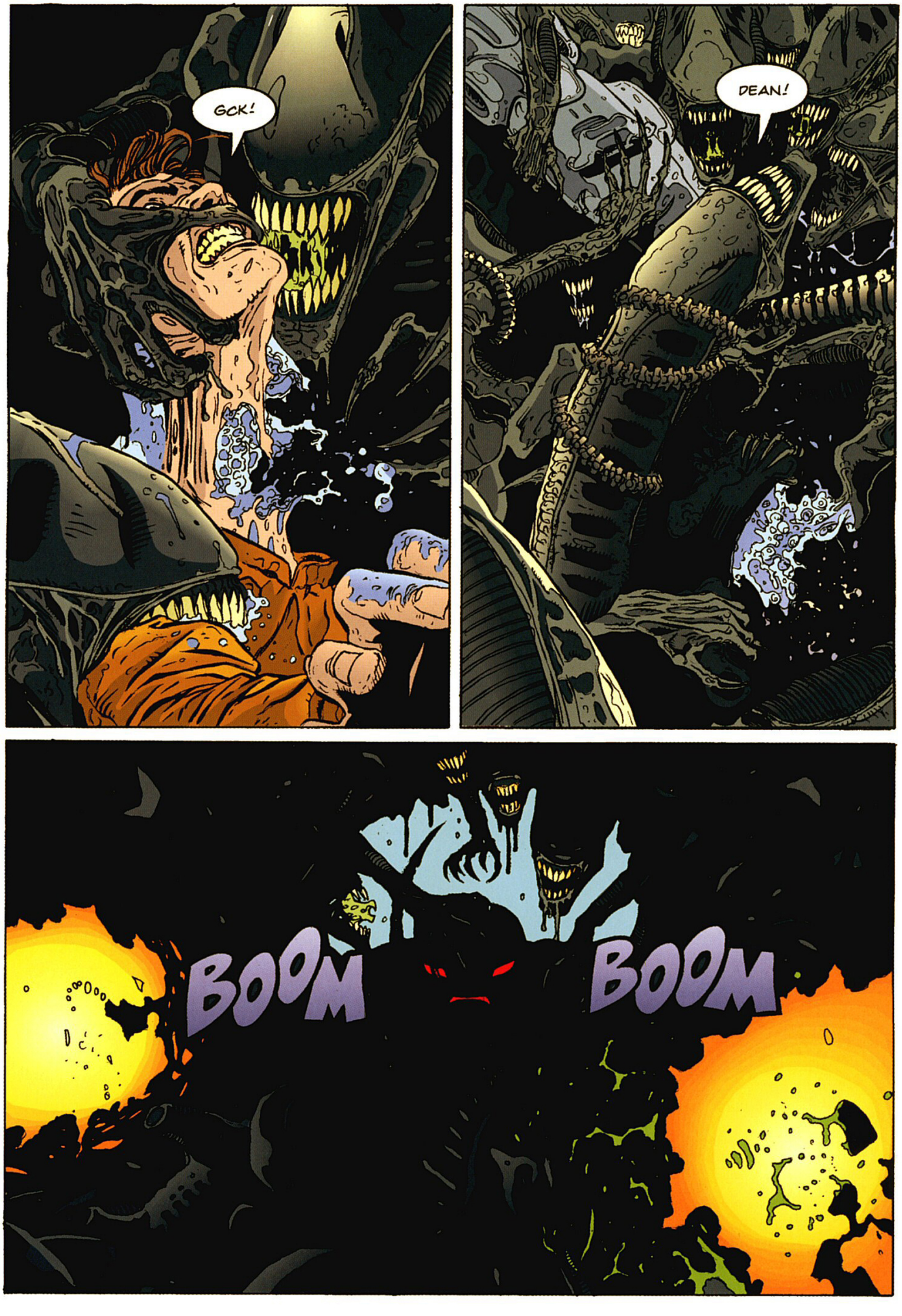
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
UHNF!
HISSSSS
LIZZYYYY!


BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM
BLAM BLAM BLAM
DOCTOR?... DOCTOR?... D-D-DOCTOR...?...
HEY, THANKS A LOT, LIZZY. YOU REALLY CAME THROUGH.
TOTAL... SYSTEMS FAIL-AIL-AIL...
KINDA WISH I COULD HELP YOU OUT, BUT THERE'S NO WAY, OLD GIRL, NOT THE SHAPE YOU'RE IN.
DOCTOR... DOCTOR... DOC... DOC... DOC...

THE WAY TO THE TRANSPORTS IS CLEAR. DOCTOR PAYNE WILL TAKE YOU THERE.
BUT, JERI, WHAT ABOUT YOU? YOU CAN'T SURVIVE IF YOU STAY HERE.
DR. STRUNK, NONE OF US OPERATES FOR AN INFINITE TIME SPAN.
COME ON, JOY! THIS AIN'T THE TIME TO GET SENTIMENTAL!
WHAT AN ABSTRUSE WOMAN.
IT'S SO DIFFICULT TO GET THINGS DONE WITH HER AROUND.

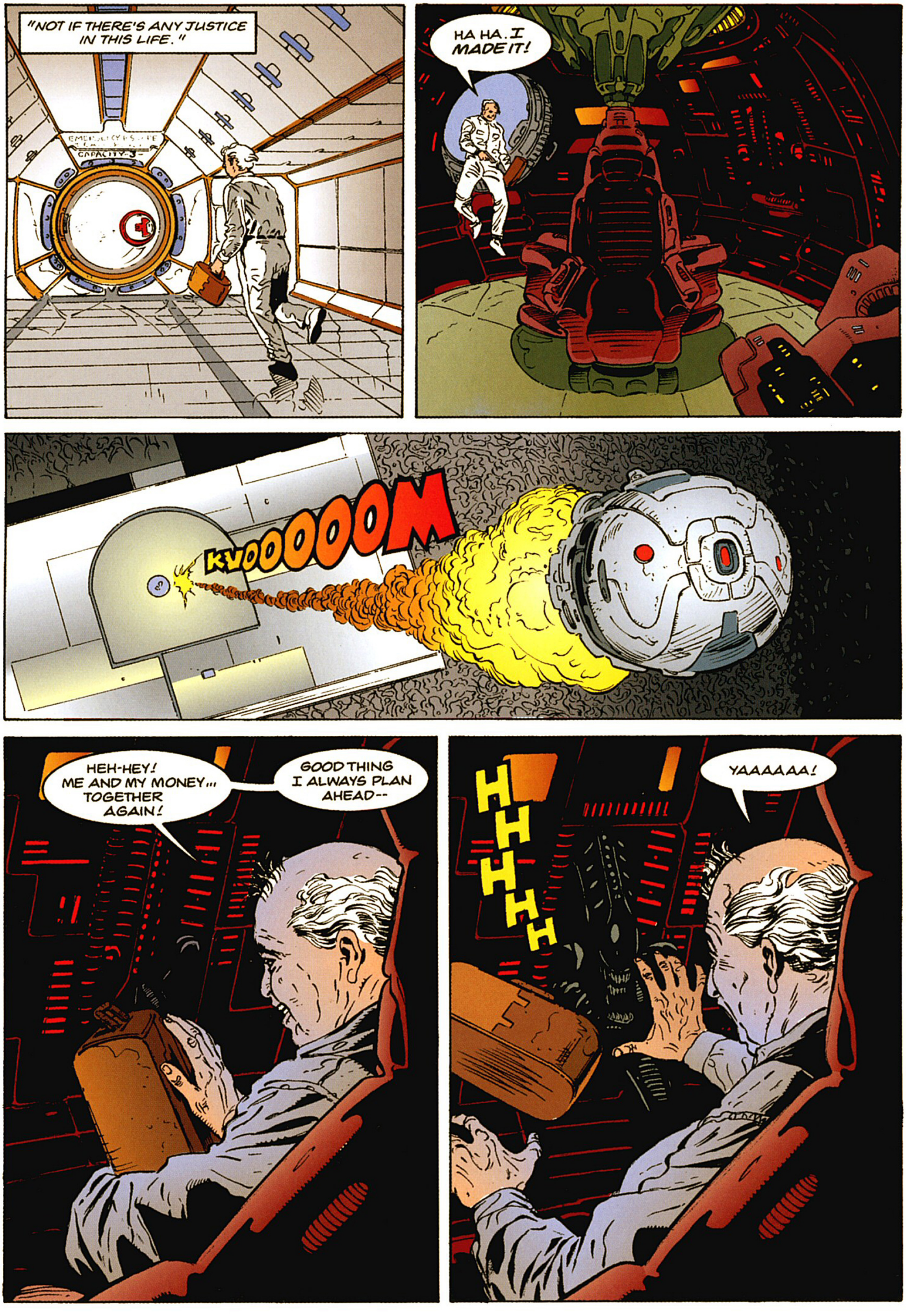
BUD-
DOOM
BLAM
BLAM

BOOM
BOOM
BOOM


GCK!
DEAN!
BOOM
BOOM

DOWN AT THE LANDING DOCK ...
BRAKA BRAKA
THAT SHOULD ABOUT DO IT. I CAN BLAST THROUGH THE OUTSIDE DOORS WITH MY SHIP'S CANNON.
YOU'RE COMING WITH US, AREN'T YOU?
I CAN'T, DOCTOR. MY PROGRAMMING WOULD ALLOW IT, BUT MY RESPONSIBILITY IS TO MY FELLOW SYNTHETICS.
IF IT'S AT ALL POSSIBLE, I'LL TRY TO REPAIR THEM.
BESIDES, IF THE CREATURES GET PAST DEAN, SOMEONE WILL HAVE TO HOLD THEM OFF.
BUT--
FOR GOD'S SAKE, JOY, GIVE IT UP!
VVRROOOM

YOU KNOW, THIS MORNING YOU ACTED AS IF YOU THOUGHT JERI WAS OUT TO KILL US AND NOW YOU'RE PRACTICALLY CRYING OVER HIM.
MY GOD, PHIL, HE SAVED OUR LIVES THREE TIMES SINCE THEN! HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO REACT?!
LOOK, I'M THANKFUL FOR THAT TOO, BUT YOU! YOU'RE PROJECTING HUMANITY ON THOSE SYNTHS, AND THEY'RE JUST MACHINES.
THEY HAVE TO ACT THAT WAY. THAT'S WHAT THEY WERE BUILT AND PROGRAMMED FOR.
JUST LIKE A COFFEE MACHINE MAKES COFFEE.
I KNOW THAT, BUT I CAN'T BE AS OBJECTIVE ABOUT IT AS YOU.
WHEN I SAW NORDLING ABUSE THEM, AND THEY COULDN'T FIGHT BACK, IT MADE THEM ALL SEEM SO... SO VULNERABLE.
YEAH, REAL VULNERABLE. TEAR THEM APART, AND YOU CAN PUT THEM RIGHT BACK TOGETHER AGAIN.
SPEAKING OF NORDLING, I WONDER IF HE GOT AWAY.
NO. NO WAY...


"NOT IF THERE'S ANY JUSTICE IN THIS LIFE."
CAPACITY
HA HA. I MADE IT!
KVOOOOOM
HEH-HEY! ME AND MY MONEY... TOGETHER AGAIN!
GOOD THING I ALWAYS PLAN AHEAD--
HHHHH
YAAAAAA!

HHHH
hello, Doctor.
J-JERI?
DAMN, JERI. YOU SCARED THE CRAP RIGHT OUTTA ME.
SorRY, doctor... Didn't Mean to, but eye --i Know WHAt will make you feel better.
...NO-KNOW What will CHEer You up.
JERI ... JERI, WHERE'D YOU GET THAT CIGAR?
YOUR friENd COMMANder CHaUt... gAVE it TO ME...
JERI, THAT THING IS VERY DANGEROUS TO ME. IT'S LACED WITH A DEADLY VIRUS --
activated by extreme heat... you said.
RRRIP
JERI, THAT'S MY LIGHTER!
lIGHtEr... DarkEr... dArkest-niGHt... Day... day-liGhT... Light... Lighter...

JERI, YOU LIGHT THAT CIGAR, YOU'LL KILL ME!
THAT'S IN DIRECT VIOLATION OF YOUR PRIME DIRECTIVE!!
DAMAGE SUSTAINED -- IN COMBAT TO -- CENTRAL PROCESSING... EXPERIENCING SYSTEM -- FAILURES.
PRIME DIE -- WRECK -- DIRECTIVE ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM HAS BEEN -- INCAPACITATED.
CHIT
PUFF PUFF
BUT I STILL KNOW A SON OF A BITCH WHEN I SEE ONE.

THE END

STRONGHOLD

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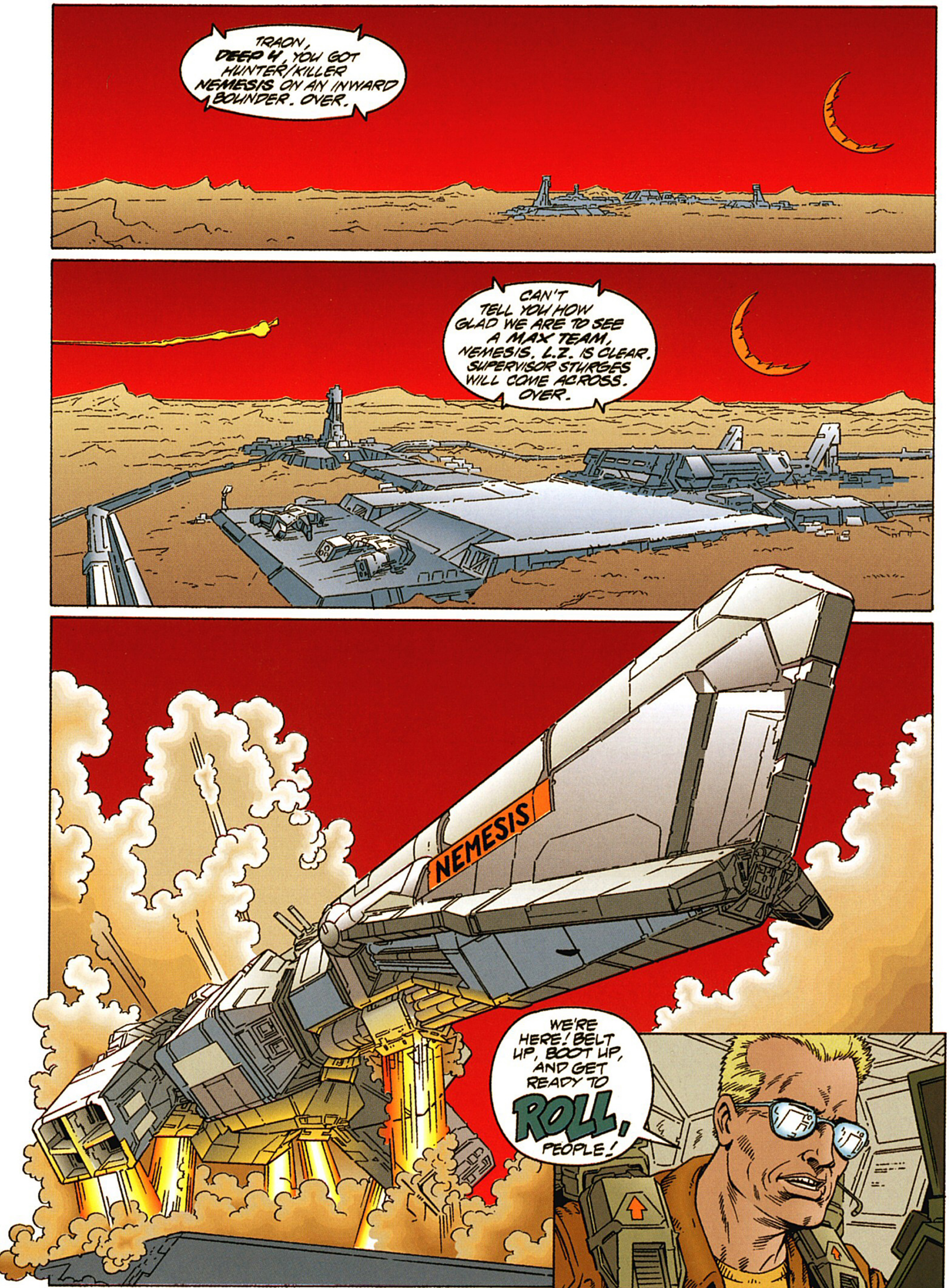
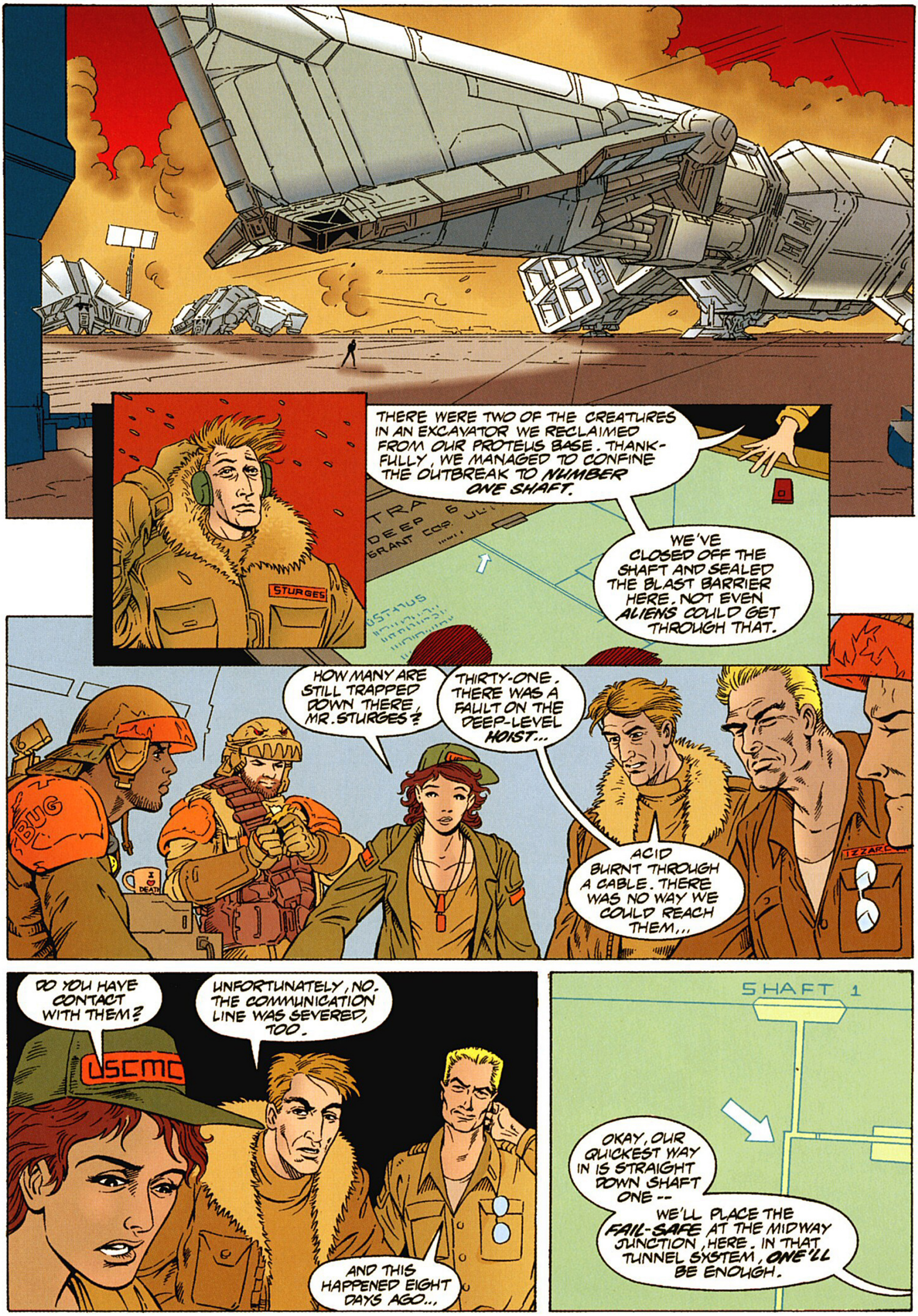
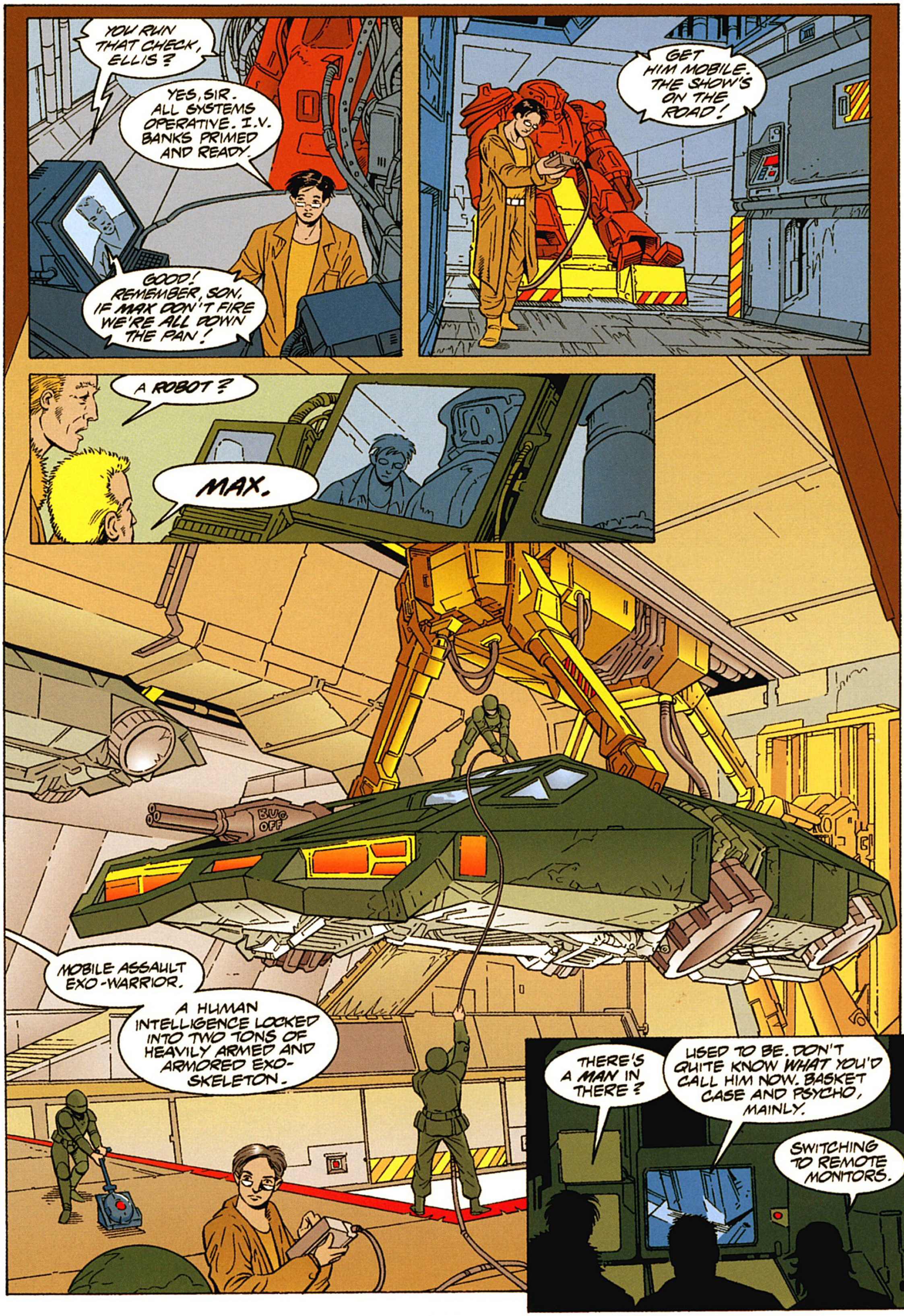

TRAON, DEEP 4, YOU GOT HUNTER/KILLER NEMESIS ON AN INWARD BOUNDER. OVER.
CAN'T TELL YOU HOW GLAD WE ARE TO SEE A MAX TEAM, NEMESIS. L.Z. IS CLEAR. SUPERVISOR STURGES WILL COME ACROSS. OVER.
NEMESIS
WE'RE HERE! BELT UP, BOOT UP, AND GET READY TO ROLL, PEOPLE!

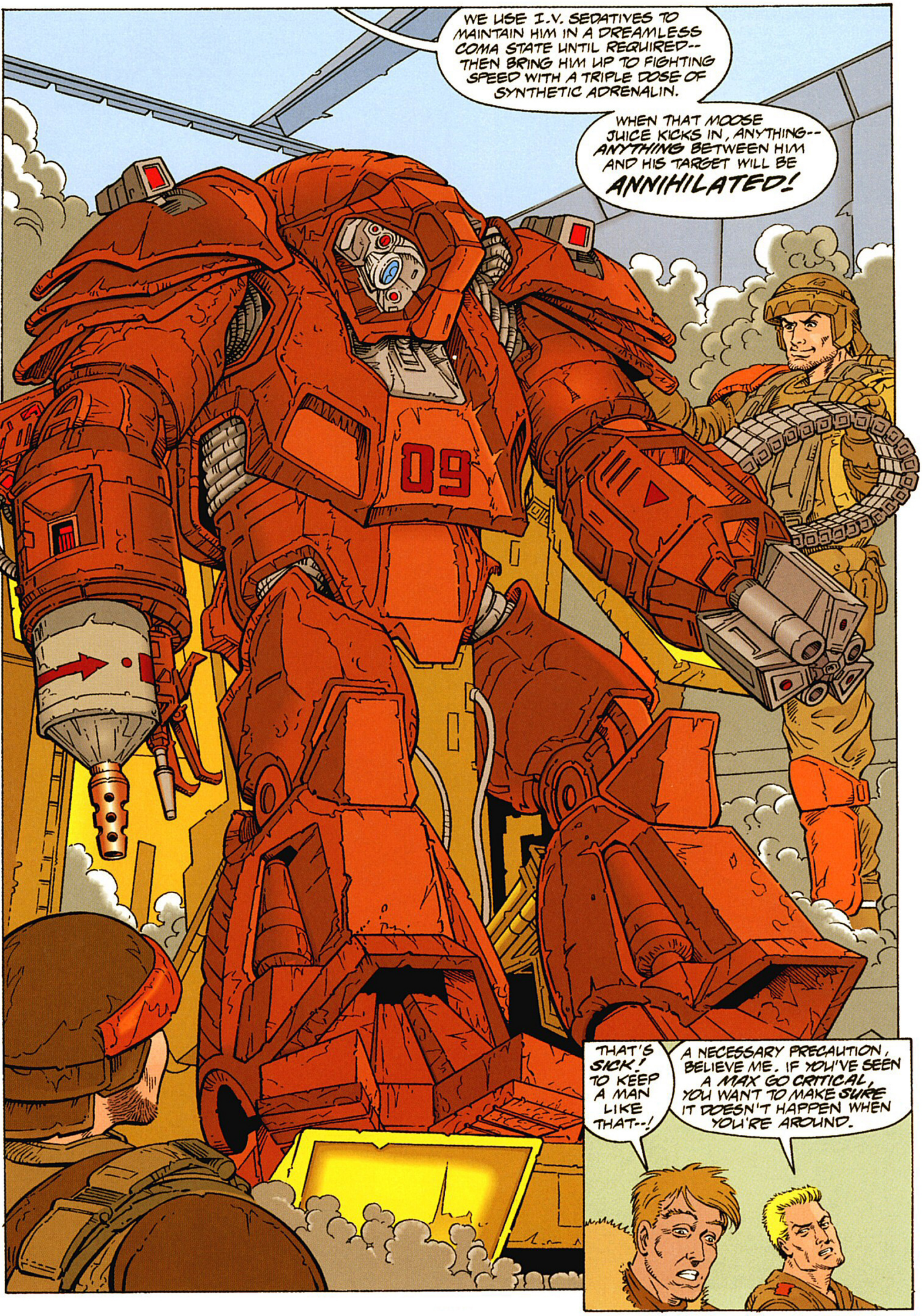
HEY, POP! TEAPE WANTS TO KNOW HOW COME THEY CAN'T TRAIN A DOG TO DO HIS JOB!
I TOLD HIM IT'S 'COS THEY CAN'T FIND A DOG DUMB ENOUGH TO VOLUNTEER!
PULASKI
JESS
TEAPE W.
YOU'RE A REAL FUNNY GUY, JESS. I'LL LIE AWAKE NIGHTS AND LAUGH ABOUT THAT ONE.
KTCH
WELL I AIN'T DUMB AN' I VOLUNTEERED!
YOUR LAST MENTAL FITNESS REPORT DESCRIBED YOU AS BORDERLINE PSYCHOTIC, DIDN'T IT, PULASKI?
SHINK
KACHUNK
EAT ME
I DON'T REMEMBER NO MENTION OF THE WORD "BORDERLINE"!
THAT'S WHAT I LIKE, A HAPPY CREW! I'M GOING TO MISS YOU LITTLE RAYS OF SUNSHINE WHEN I'M GONE!
HOW'S MAX, ELLIS?
STILL IN DEEP SEDATION, SIR. RESPIRATORY RATE EVEN, NO REMS.
YOU WANT ME TO RUN A FULL SYSTEMS CHECK, COMMANDER?
THAT WOULD BE HELPFUL, SON. WE MAY BE NEEDING HIM SOON.
TWENTY-SIX MISSIONS AND THEY SADDLE ME WITH ELLIS! WHAT DOES THE GUY DO ALL DAY?
HE'S GREEN. HE'S A GOOD MEDIC. GIVE HIM A CHANCE.


THERE WERE TWO OF THE CREATURES IN AN EXCAVATOR WE RECLAIMED FROM OUR PROTEUS BASE. THANKFULLY, WE MANAGED TO CONFINE THE OUTBREAK TO NUMBER ONE SHAFT.
WE'VE CLOSED OFF THE SHAFT AND SEALED THE BLAST BARRIER HERE. NOT EVEN ALIENS COULD GET THROUGH THAT.
STURGES
HOW MANY ARE STILL TRAPPED DOWN THERE, MR. STURGES?
THIRTY-ONE. THERE WAS A FAULT ON THE DEEP-LEVEL HOIST...
ACID BURNT THROUGH A CABLE. THERE WAS NO WAY WE COULD REACH THEM...
BUG
DO YOU HAVE CONTACT WITH THEM?
UNFORTUNATELY, NO. THE COMMUNICATION LINE WAS SEVERED, TOO.
USCMC
AND THIS HAPPENED EIGHT DAYS AGO...
SHAFT 1
OKAY, OUR QUICKEST WAY IN IS STRAIGHT DOWN SHAFT ONE --
WE'LL PLACE THE FAIL-SAFE AT THE MIDWAY JUNCTION, HERE. IN THAT TUNNEL SYSTEM, ONE'LL BE ENOUGH.

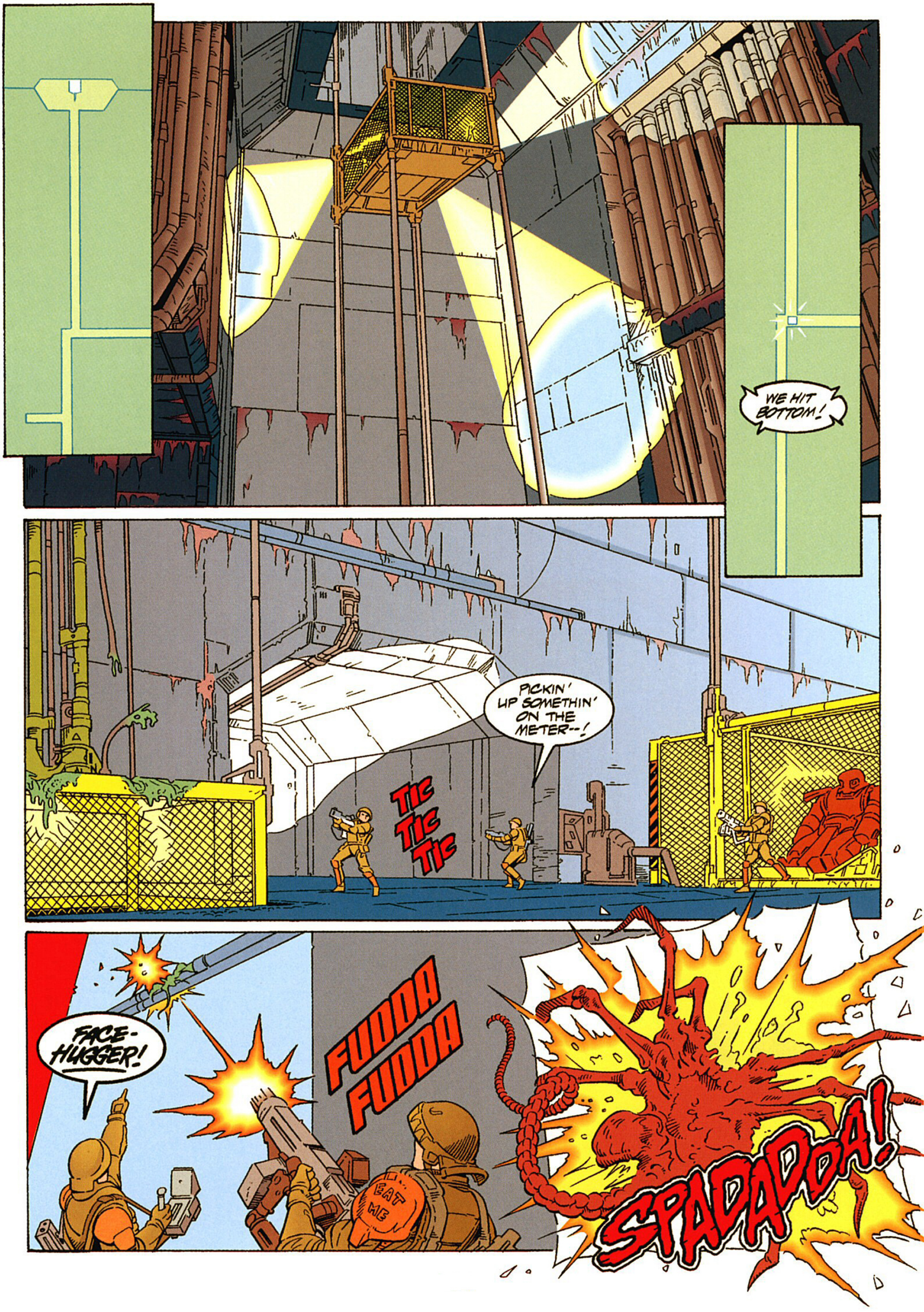
THAT NUKE GOES BANG THERE AIN'T GONNA BE ANY DEEP 4!
BYE-BYE BUGS!
BYE-BYE US!
A-A NUCLEAR DEVICE--?IS... IS THAT NECESSARY, COMMANDER IZZARD? THE SILURIUM DEPOSITS ARE PRICELESS!
STRICT COMPANY REQUIREMENT, STURGES.
YOU SHOULD KNOW BY NOW, WE'RE DEALING WITH THE MOST DANGEROUS LIFE-FORM MAN HAS EVER ENCOUNTERED. WHEN MY TEAM GOES IN WE CAN'T TAKE ANY CHANCES. WE HAVE TO KNOW IF WE FAIL, NOTHING IS COMING OUT ALIVE!
IZZAR
BUT THE PEOPLE TRAPPED IN THERE--
IT'S BEEN EIGHT DAYS. TAKE IT FROM ME, IT'S PROBABLY ALREADY TOO LATE FOR THEM.
ANYTHING ELSE-- COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER?
THE USUAL REMINDER--KEEP DROPPING YOUR RELAY BEACONS. IF THE SIGNAL TRACE FADES, GO BACK AND MAKE GOOD. YOU MUST MAINTAIN COMMUNICATIONS AT ALL TIMES.
THAT'S IT! YOU KNOW THE DRILL! LET'S GET IT DONE!
YO!
OPERA
JUST THREE MEN? I EXPECTED AN ARMY!
MESIS
OH, WE GOT THAT, TOO--
IZZARD

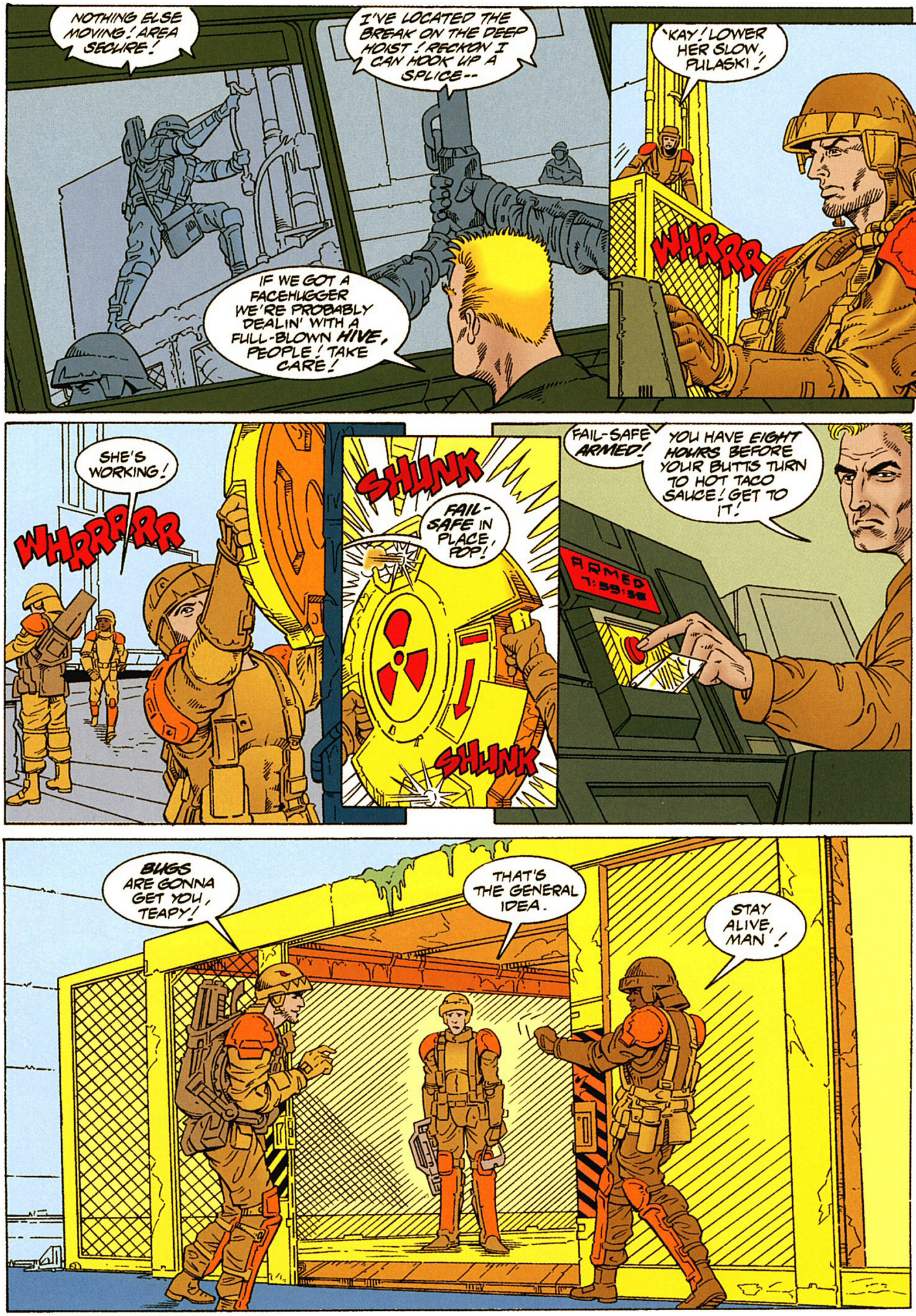


YOU RUN THAT CHECK, ELLIS?
YES, SIR. ALL SYSTEMS OPERATIVE. I.V. BANKS PRIMED AND READY.
GOOD! REMEMBER, SON, IF MAX DON'T FIRE WE'RE ALL DOWN THE PAN!
GET HIM MOBILE. THE SHOW'S ON THE ROAD!
A ROBOT?
MAX.
BUG OFF
MOBILE ASSAULT EXO-WARRIOR.
A HUMAN INTELLIGENCE LOCKED INTO TWO TONS OF HEAVILY ARMED AND ARMORED EXO-SKELETON.
THERE'S A MAN IN THERE?
USED TO BE. DON'T QUITE KNOW WHAT YOU'D CALL HIM NOW. BASKET CASE AND PSYCHO, MAINLY.
SWITCHING TO REMOTE MONITORS.


WE USE I.V. SEDATIVES TO MAINTAIN HIM IN A DREAMLESS COMA STATE UNTIL REQUIRED-- THEN BRING HIM UP TO FIGHTING SPEED WITH A TRIPLE DOSE OF SYNTHETIC ADRENALIN.
WHEN THAT MOOSE JUICE KICKS IN, ANYTHING-- ANYTHING BETWEEN HIM AND HIS TARGET WILL BE ANNIHILATED!
09
THAT'S SICK! TO KEEP A MAN LIKE THAT--!
A NECESSARY PRECAUTION, BELIEVE ME. IF YOU'VE SEEN A MAX GO CRITICAL, YOU WANT TO MAKE SURE IT DOESN'T HAPPEN WHEN YOU'RE AROUND.

VRRRMMMMM
WE GOT US A BUGHUNT!
SHAFT 1
Ø325117E
A4-1
EAFE W.
PULASKI
JESS
WE'RE INSIDE THE SHAFTHEAD! NO SIGN OF ALIEN ACTIVITY! GOIN' ON DOWN!
DROP A RELAY!
CHECK RELAY!
READING YOU LOUD AND CLEAR!


WE HIT BOTTOM!
PICKIN' UP SOMETHIN' ON THE METER--!
TIC TIC TIC
FACE-HUGGER!
FUDDA FUDDA
EAT ME
SPADADDA!

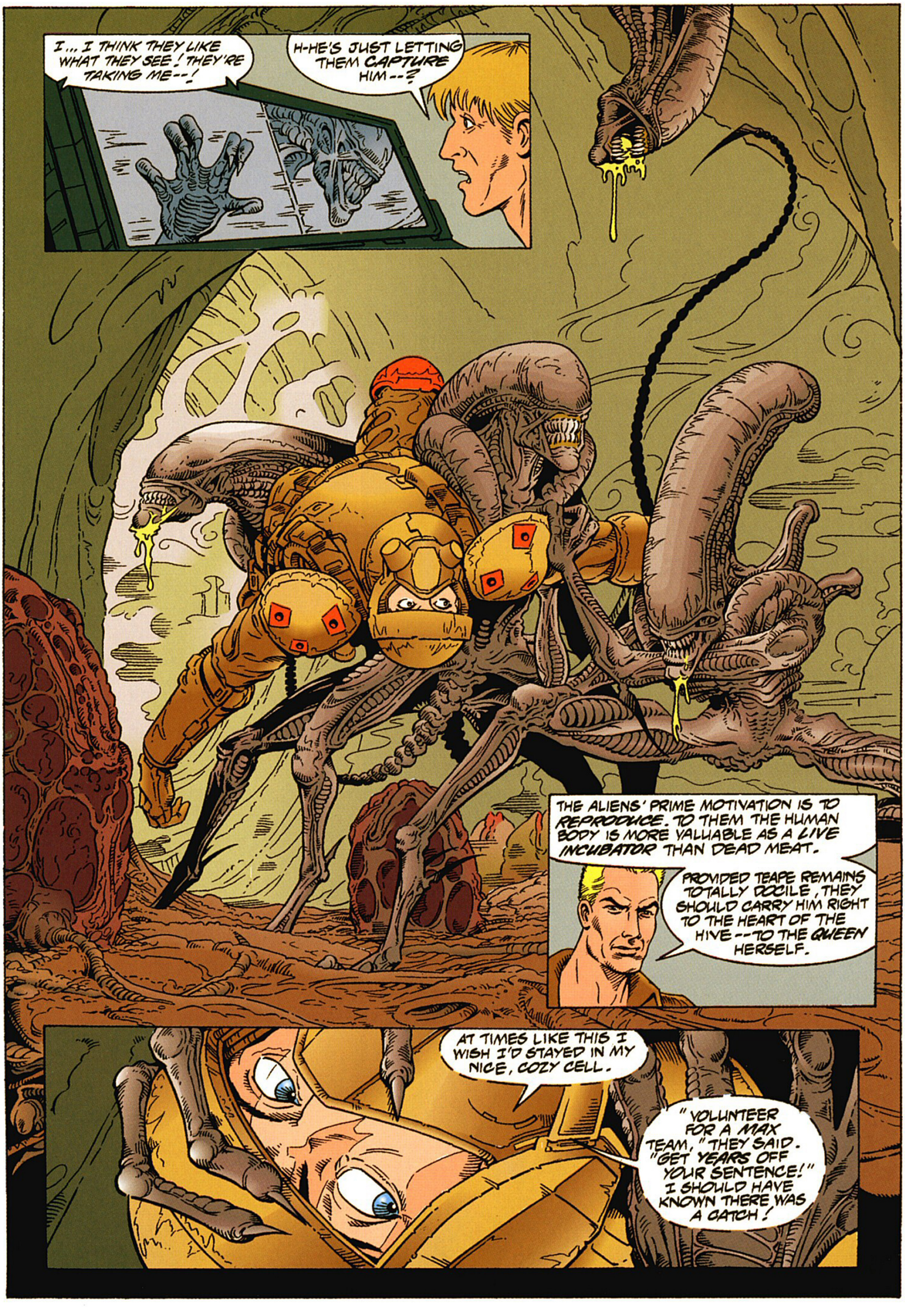


NOTHING ELSE MOVING! AREA SECURE!
I'VE LOCATED THE BREAK ON THE DEEP HOIST! RECKON I CAN HOOK UP A SPLICE--
IF WE GOT A FACEHUGGER WE'RE PROBABLY DEALIN' WITH A FULL-BLOWN HIVE, PEOPLE! TAKE CARE!
'KAY! LOWER HER SLOW, PULASKI!
WHRRRR
SHE'S WORKING!
WHRRRRRR
SHUNK
FAIL-SAFE IN PLACE, POP!
SHUNK
FAIL-SAFE ARMED!
YOU HAVE EIGHT HOURS BEFORE YOUR BUTTS TURN TO HOT TACO SAUCE! GET TO IT!
ARMED
7:59:59
BUGS ARE GONNA GET YOU, TEAPY!
THAT'S THE GENERAL IDEA.
STAY ALIVE, MAN!

I'M AT THE FIRST SPUR. I CAN SEE MOST OF THE WAY ALONG! NOTHING MOVING!
LEAVE IT FOR GROUND LEADER. MOVE ON DOWN TEAPE.
YOU'RE SENDING HIM IN ALONE?
POINT MAN ALWAYS GOES AHEAD. WE DON'T JEOPARDIZE MAX UNTIL WE KNOW WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST.
WHADDAYA THINK HE'S THINKIN'?
HE AIN'T THINKIN' ZIP, MEATBALL... AN' MAYBE IN THIS JOB THAT'S THE WAY TO BE!
LET'S RUN THROUGH THIS ONE LAST TIME--
10 MM HEAP 3000 RND
30 MM HEX GREN 90 CNT
SOLID
FLAMETHROWER!
ARMED!
GRENADE LAUNCHERS!
ARMED!
PULSE RIFLES!
ARMED!
I'M GETTING SOMETHING ON THE METER--
TIC TIC TIC

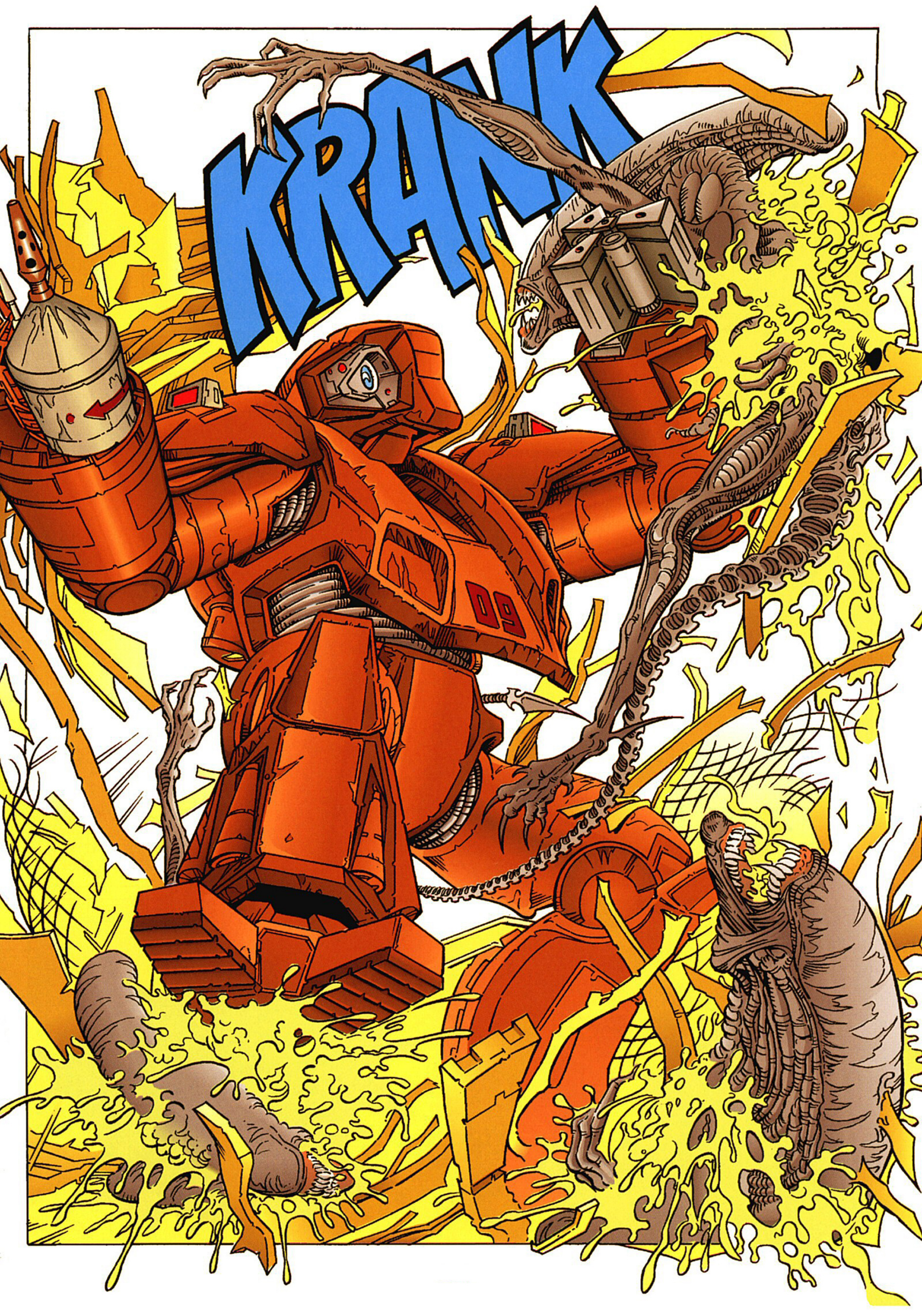
KLAANG!
HHHHHHHH
HHHHHHH
FUDDA
FUDDA
THAT'S ONE WE DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT.
I'VE HIT BOTTOM! MASK SECURE.
FLARE!

WE'VE HIT THE MOTHERLODE!
Hell'pp meee
TH-THEY'RE COMING FOR ME! THEY'RE ALL AROUND ME!

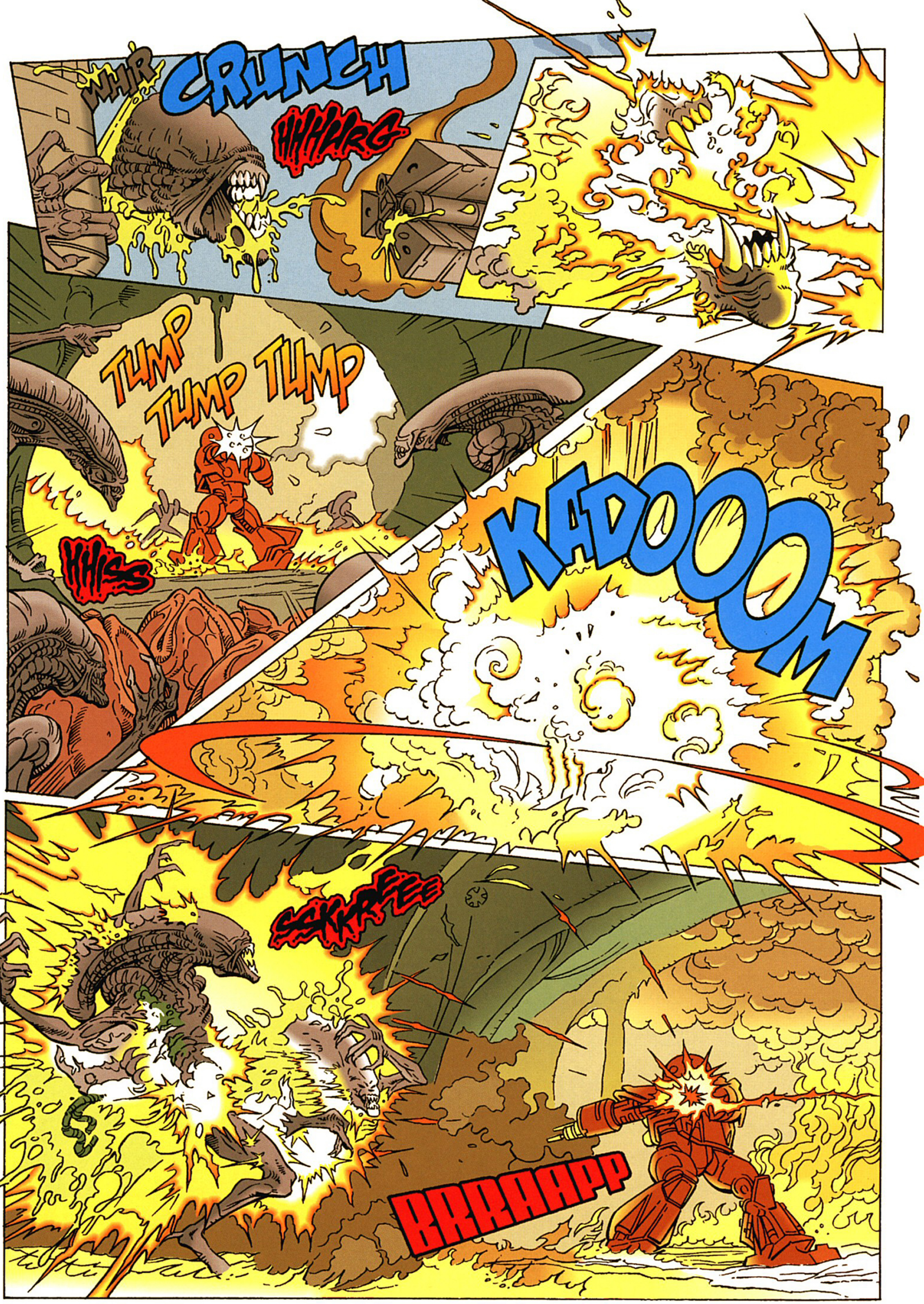

I... I THINK THEY LIKE WHAT THEY SEE! THEY'RE TAKING ME--!
H-HE'S JUST LETTING THEM CAPTURE HIM--?
THE ALIENS' PRIME MOTIVATION IS TO REPRODUCE. TO THEM THE HUMAN BODY IS MORE VALUABLE AS A LIVE INCUBATOR THAN DEAD MEAT.
PROVIDED TEAPE REMAINS TOTALLY DOCILE, THEY SHOULD CARRY HIM RIGHT TO THE HEART OF THE HIVE--TO THE QUEEN HERSELF.
AT TIMES LIKE THIS I WISH I'D STAYED IN MY NICE, COZY CELL.
"VOLUNTEER FOR A MAX TEAM," THEY SAID. "GET YEARS OFF YOUR SENTENCE!" I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THERE WAS A CATCH!

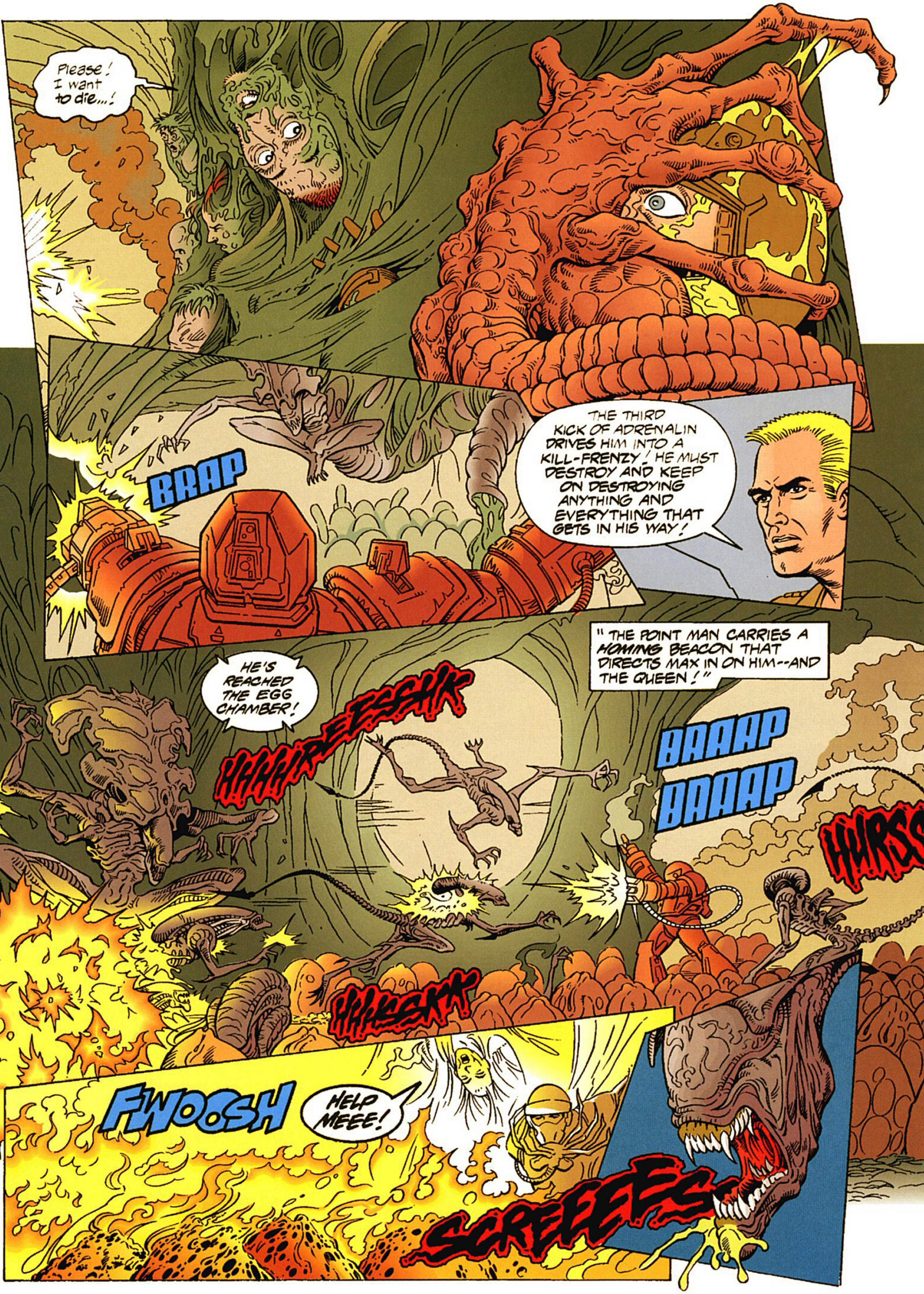
PICTURE'S COMING THROUGH NICE AND SHARP, TEAPE.
THERE'S THE LADY HERSELF!
TIME TO MOVE, GROUND LEADER!
DROP OFF AT THE FIRST SPUR AND DECONTAMINATE-- SEND MAX ON DOWN!
uhhhhh
NO SAVING ANY OF THESE POOR DEVILS, POP! HURRY IT UP, WILL YOU?
HELP'S ON ITS WAY!
GO GET 'EM, MAX!
WATCH YOUR BACK, CANDY MAN!
FUDDA
FUDDA
HE'S HIT BOTTOM!

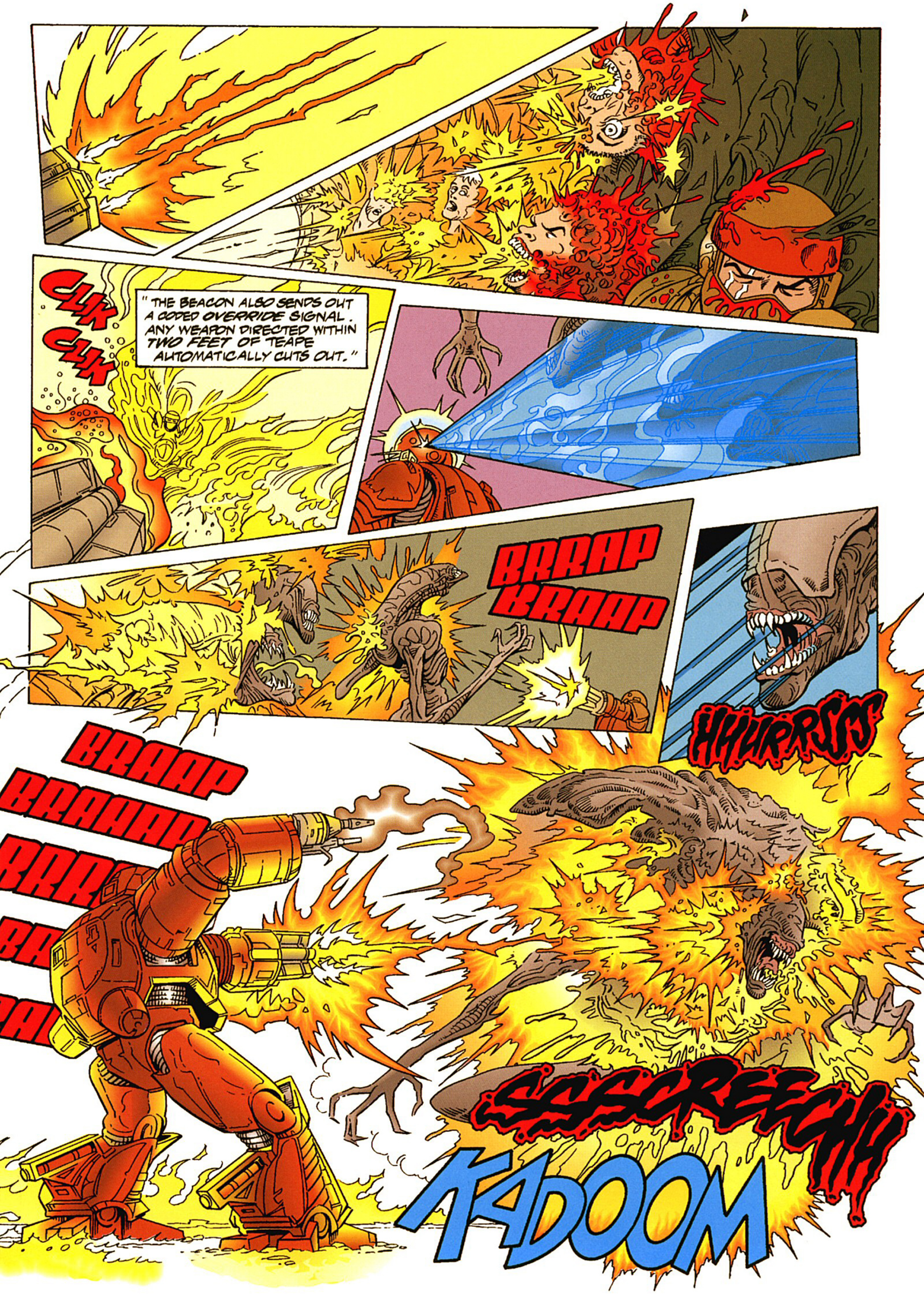
CEASE SEDATION! FLUSH HIM!
FLUSHING!
KICK IN ADRENALIN!
ADRENALIN, LEVEL ONE!
NUHHHH!
NUUUHHHH
HIT HIM AGAIN!
LEVEL TWO!
NUUUHH!
BRING HIM TO THE BOIL!
LEVEL THREE!
FULL SCAN

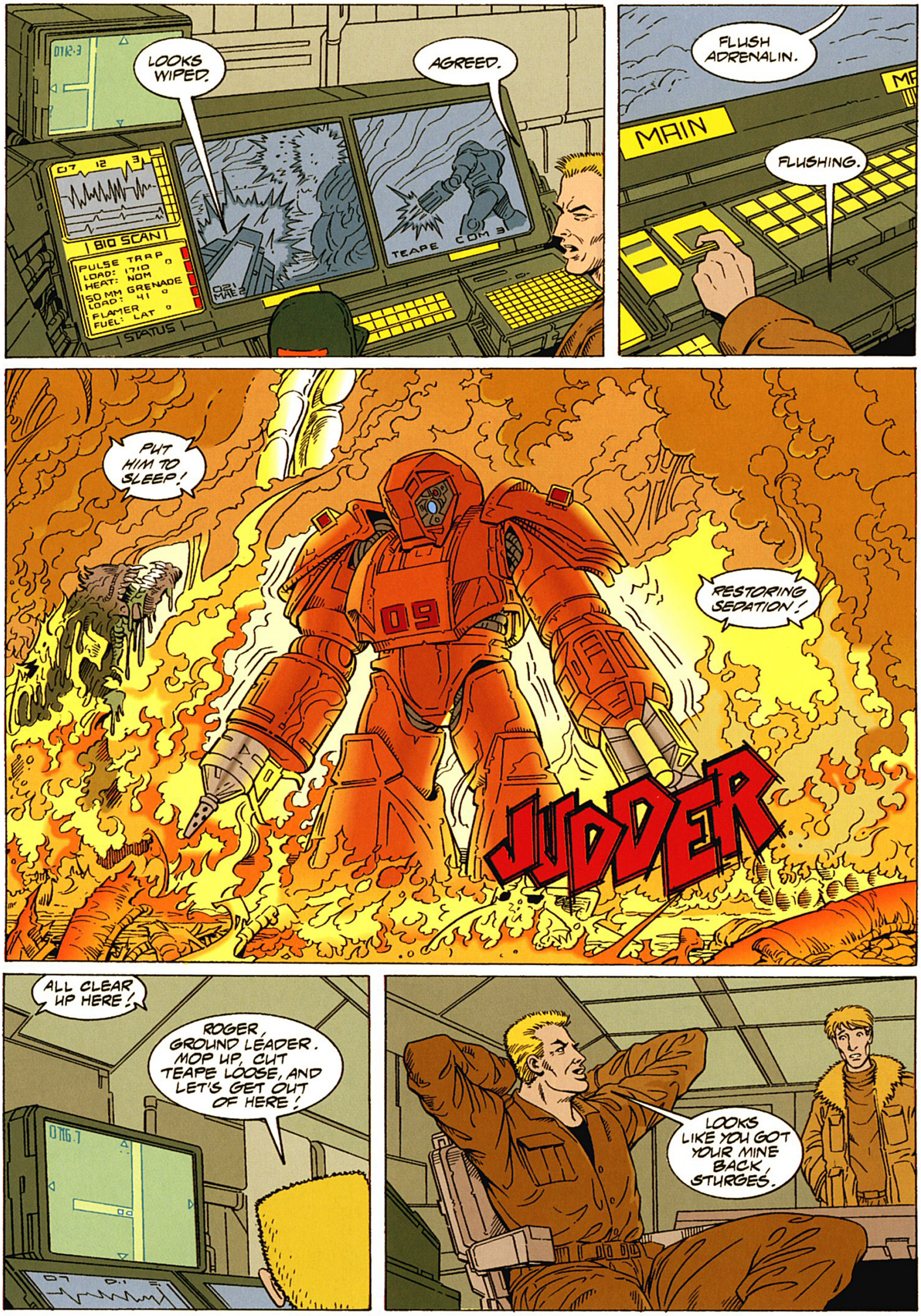

KRANK

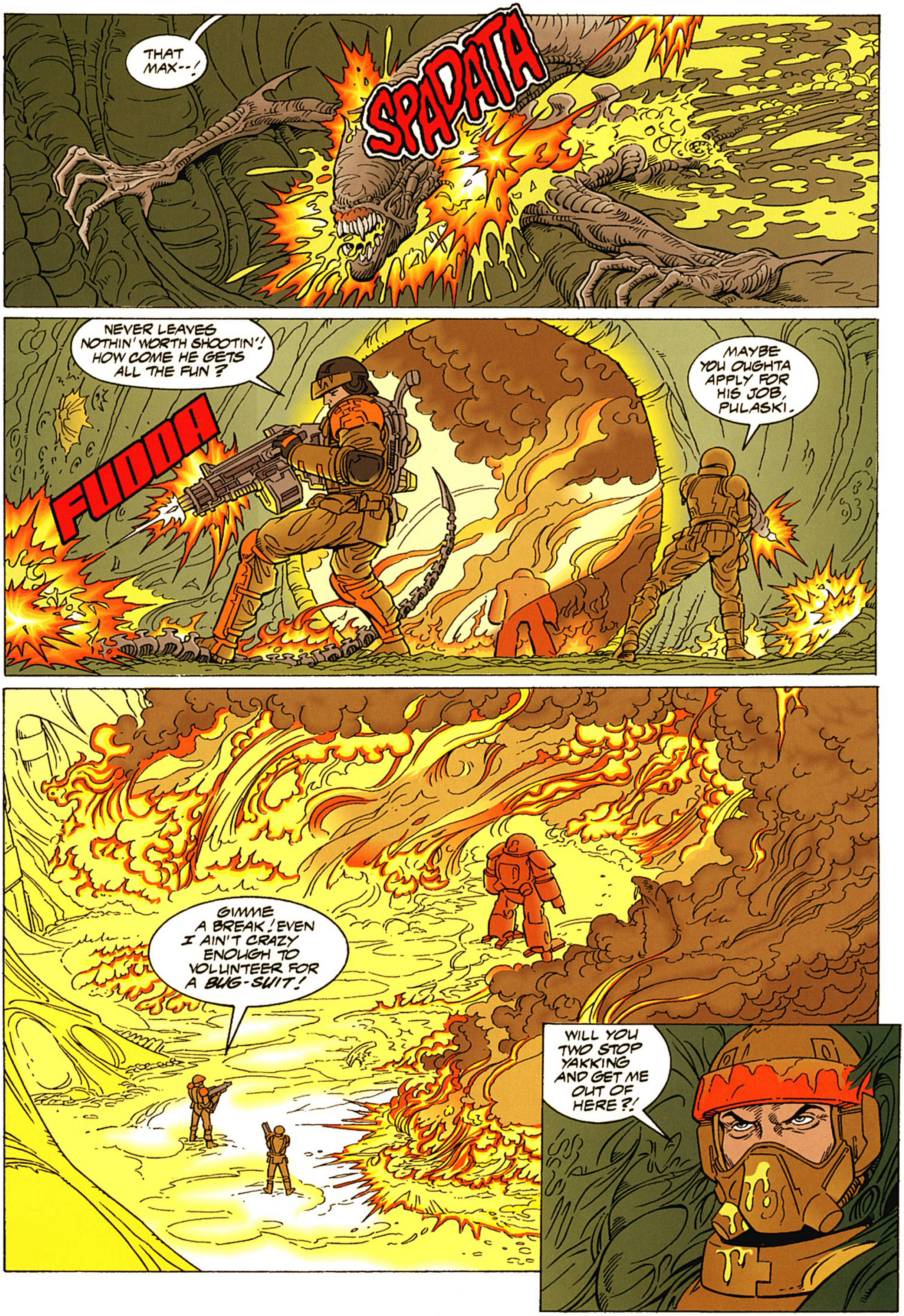
BRRAAAPPP
FWOMSH
HHHHISSS
BRRRAPPP
KLANG

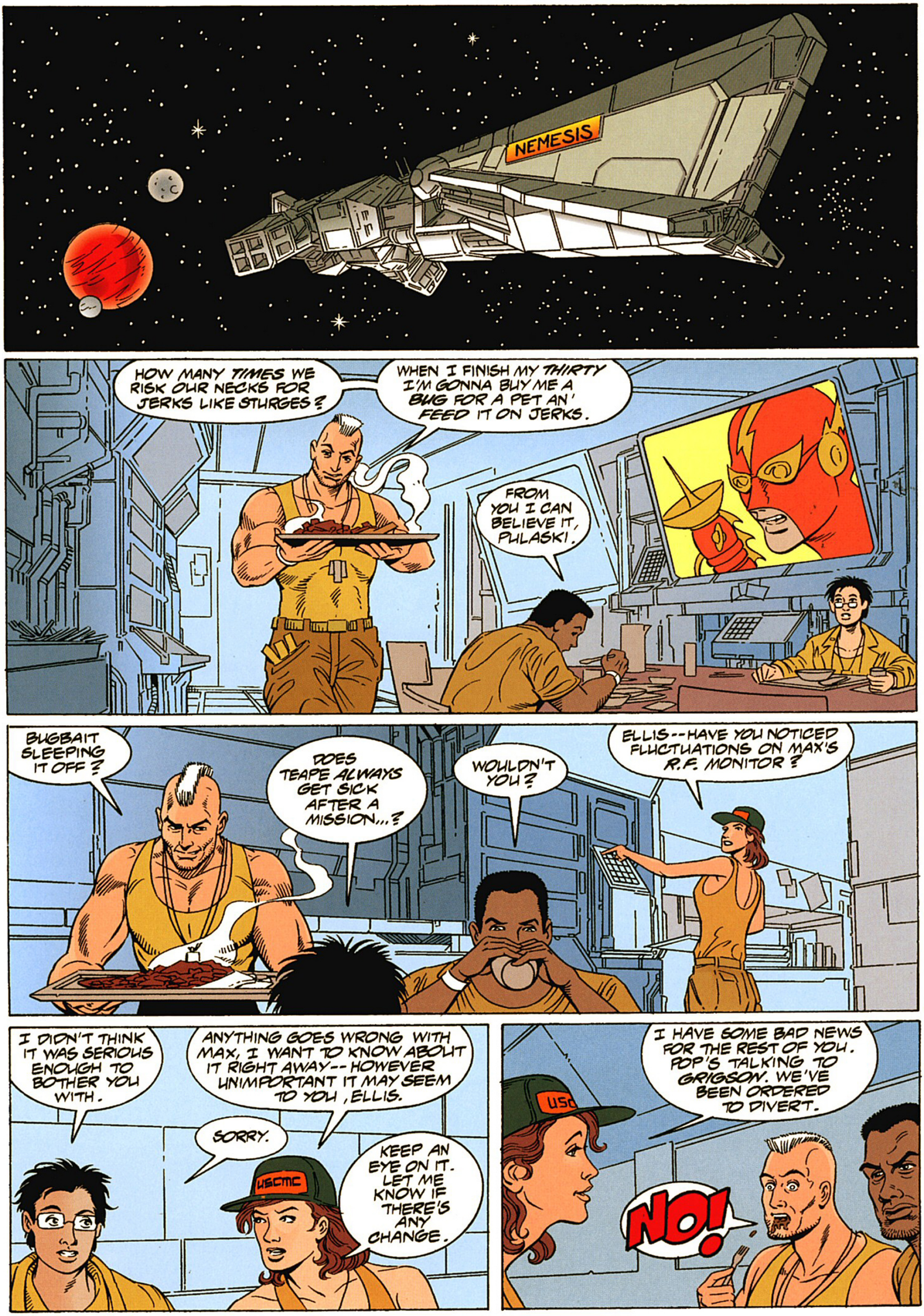

WHIR
CRUNCH
HHHRRG
TUMP
TUMP TUMP
HHISS
KADOOOOM
SSKKREEE
BRRAAPP

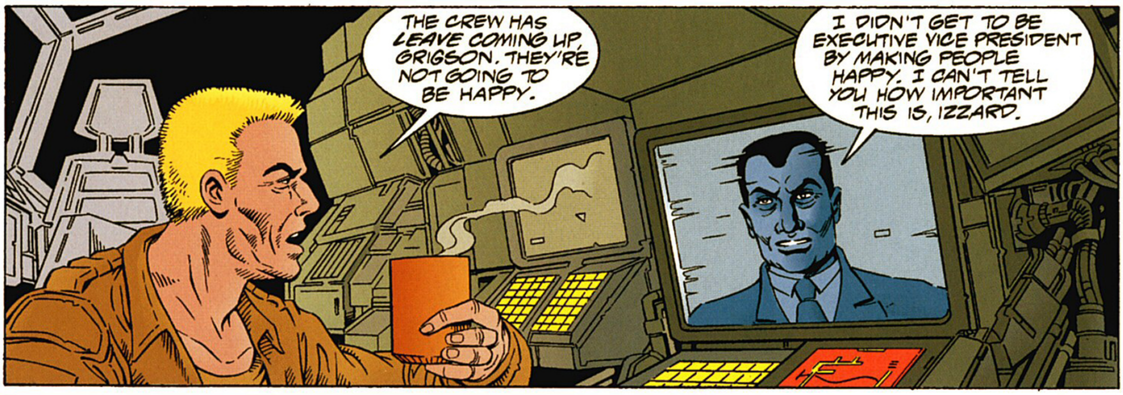

Please! I want to die...!
BRAP
THE THIRD KICK OF ADRENALIN DRIVES HIM INTO A KILL-FRENZY! HE MUST DESTROY AND KEEP ON DESTROYING ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING THAT GETS IN HIS WAY!
"THE POINT MAN CARRIES A HOMING BEACON THAT DIRECTS MAX IN ON HIM--AND THE QUEEN!"
HE'S REACHED THE EGG CHAMBER!
BAAAP
BAAAP
FWOOSH
HELP MEEE!

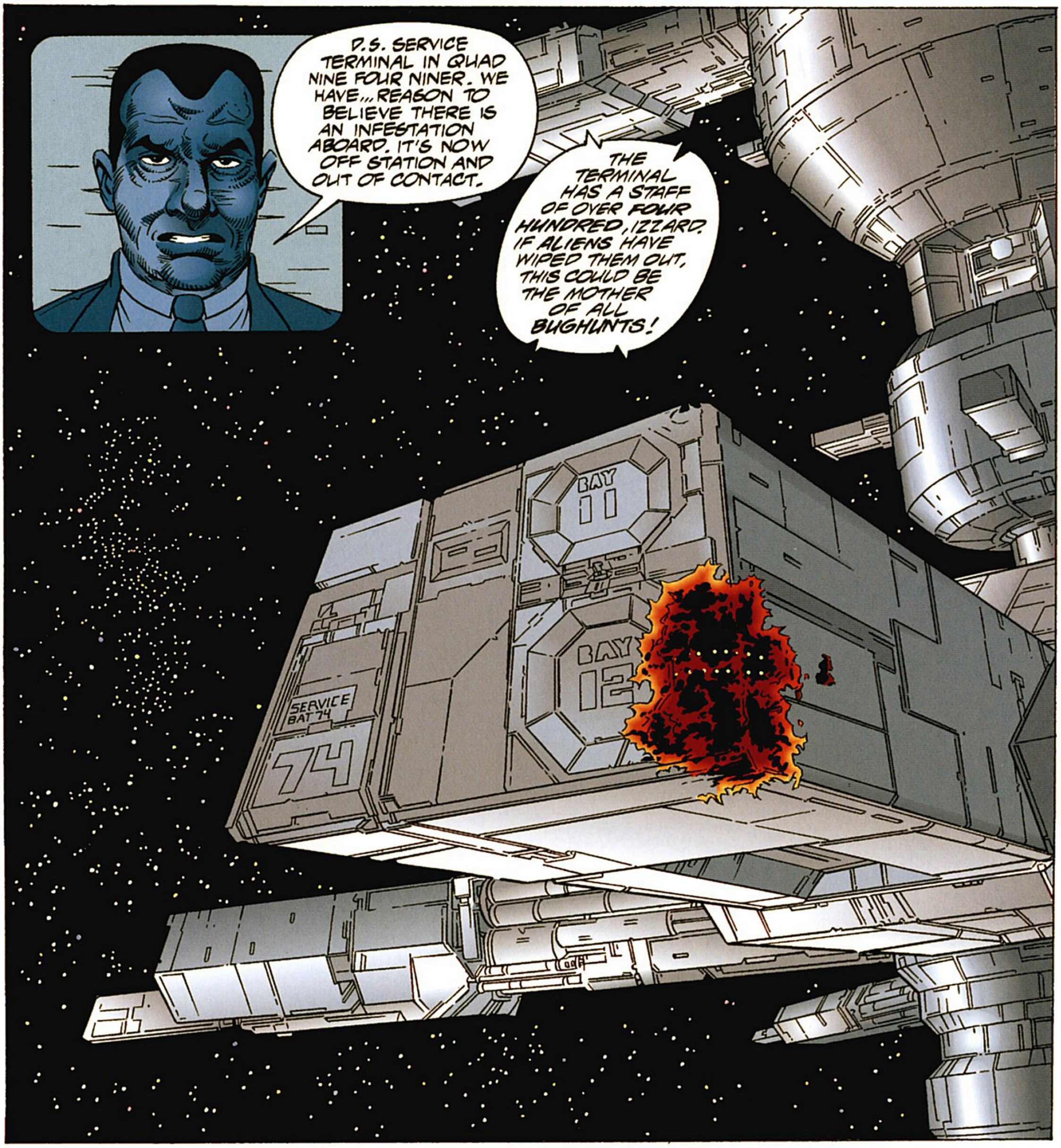

CLIK CLIK
"THE BEACON ALSO SENDS OUT A CODED OVERRIDE SIGNAL. ANY WEAPON DIRECTED WITHIN TWO FEET OF TEAPE AUTOMATICALLY CUTS OUT."
BRRAP BRAAAP
HHURRSSS
BRAAAP
BRAAAAP
SSSCREECHH
KADOOM

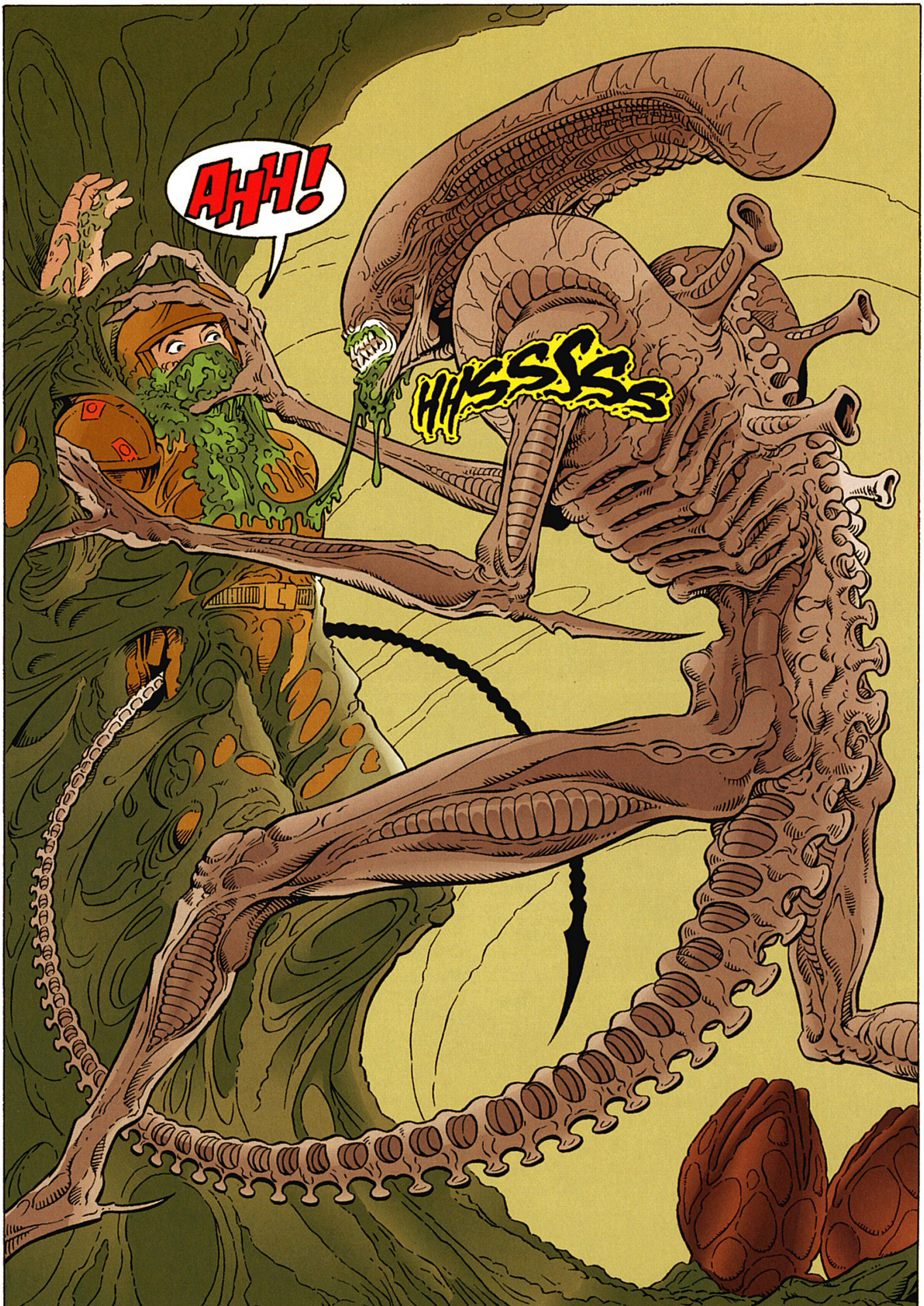

LOOKS WIPED.
AGREED.
BIO SCAN
PULSE TRAP
LOAD: 1710
HEAT: NOM
50 MM GRENADE
LOAD: 41
FLAMER
FUEL: LAT
STATUS
TEAPE COM 3
FLUSH ADRENALIN.
MAIN
FLUSHING.
PUT HIM TO SLEEP!
RESTORING SEDATION!
09
JUDDER
ALL CLEAR UP HERE!
ROGER, GROUND LEADER. MOP UP, CUT TEAPE LOOSE, AND LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!
LOOKS LIKE YOU GOT YOUR MINE BACK, STURGES.


THAT MAX--!
SPADATA
NEVER LEAVES NOTHIN' WORTH SHOOTIN'! HOW COME HE GETS ALL THE FUN?
FUDDA
MAYBE YOU OUGHTA APPLY FOR HIS JOB, PULASKI.
GIMME A BREAK! EVEN I AIN'T CRAZY ENOUGH TO VOLUNTEER FOR A BUG-SUIT!
WILL YOU TWO STOP YAKKING AND GET ME OUT OF HERE?!

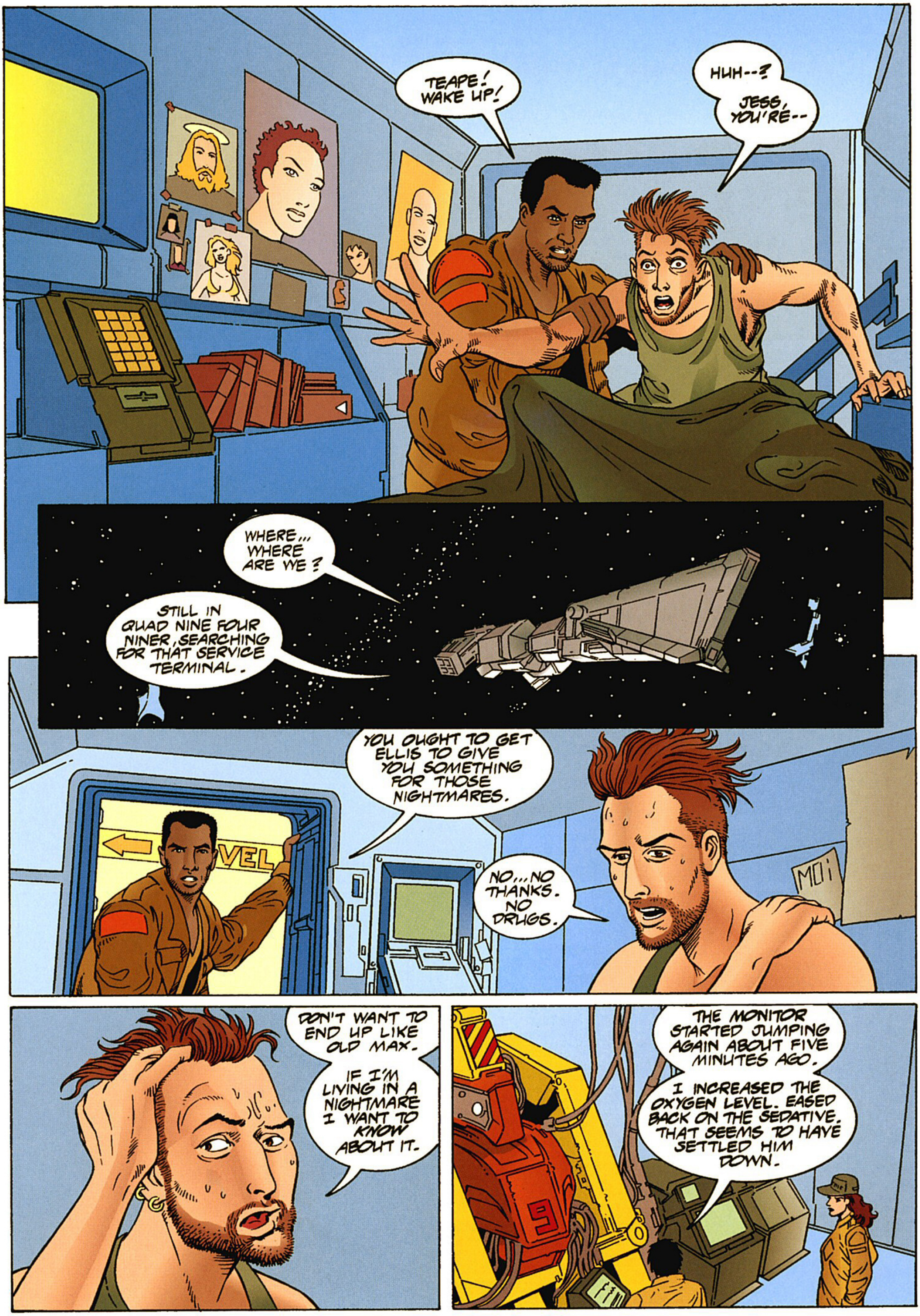

NEMESIS
HOW MANY TIMES WE RISK OUR NECKS FOR JERKS LIKE STURGES?
WHEN I FINISH MY THIRTY I'M GONNA BUY ME A BUG FOR A PET AN' FEED IT ON JERKS.
FROM YOU I CAN BELIEVE IT, PULASKI.
BUGBAIT SLEEPING IT OFF?
DOES TEAPE ALWAYS GET SICK AFTER A MISSION...?
WOULDN'T YOU?
ELLIS--HAVE YOU NOTICED FLUCTUATIONS ON MAX'S R.F. MONITOR?
I DIDN'T THINK IT WAS SERIOUS ENOUGH TO BOTHER YOU WITH.
ANYTHING GOES WRONG WITH MAX, I WANT TO KNOW ABOUT IT RIGHT AWAY--HOWEVER UNIMPORTANT IT MAY SEEM TO YOU, ELLIS.
SORRY.
USCMC
KEEP AN EYE ON IT. LET ME KNOW IF THERE'S ANY CHANGE.
I HAVE SOME BAD NEWS FOR THE REST OF YOU. POP'S TALKING TO GRIGSON. WE'VE BEEN ORDERED TO DIVERT.
NO!


THE CREW HAS LEAVE COMING UP, GRIGSON. THEY'RE NOT GOING TO BE HAPPY.
I DIDN'T GET TO BE EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT BY MAKING PEOPLE HAPPY. I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW IMPORTANT THIS IS, IZZARD.

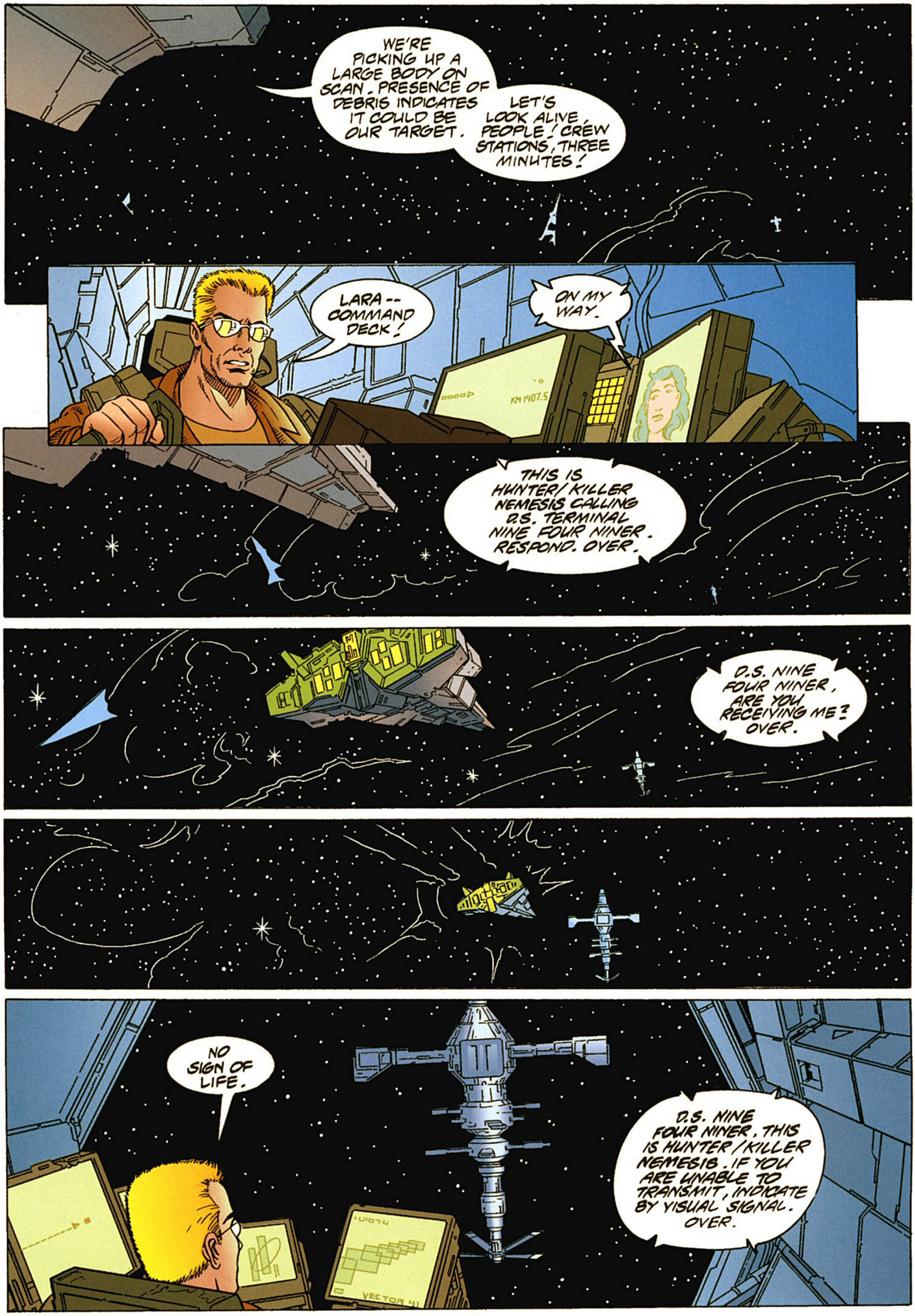

D.S. SERVICE TERMINAL IN QUAD NINE FOUR NINER. WE HAVE... REASON TO BELIEVE THERE IS AN INFESTATION ABOARD. IT'S NOW OFF STATION AND OUT OF CONTACT.
THE TERMINAL HAS A STAFF OF OVER FOUR HUNDRED, IZZARD. IF ALIENS HAVE WIPED THEM OUT, THIS COULD BE THE MOTHER OF ALL BUGHUNTS!
BAY 11
BAY 12
SERVICE BAT 74
74

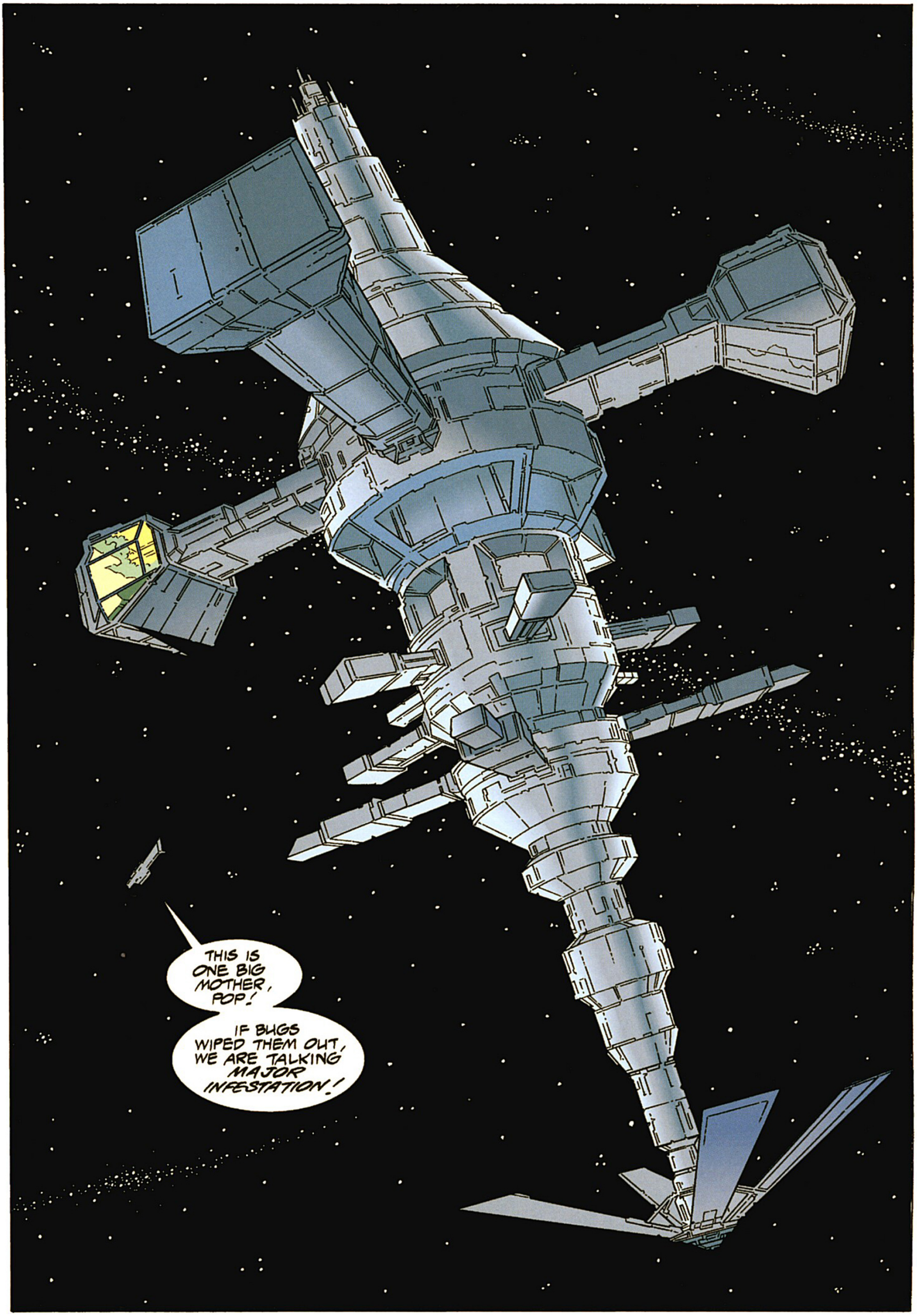

AHH!
HHSSSSs

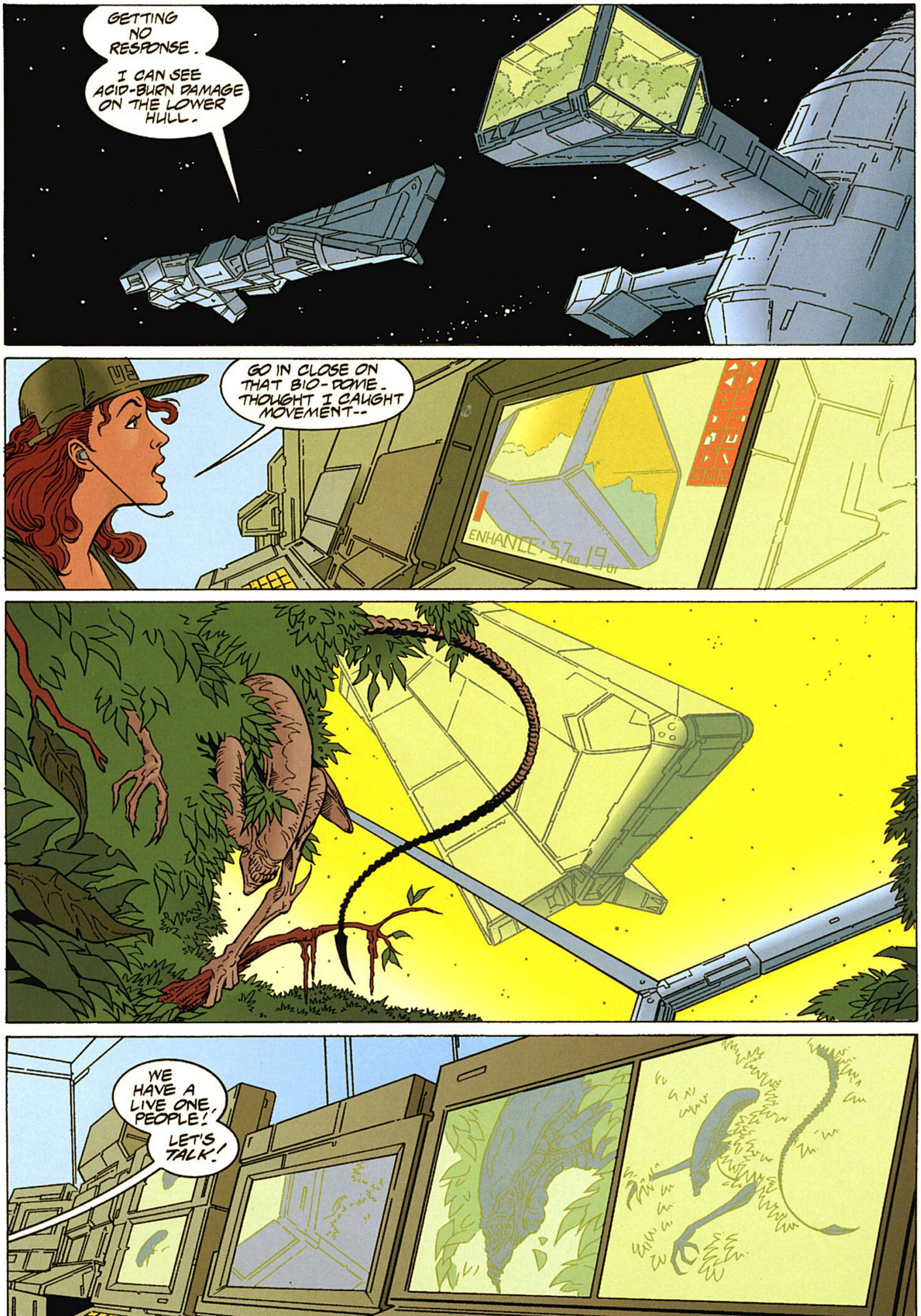
ACID'S EATING THROUGH THE MASK! THEY'RE PULLING IT OFF!
WHERE'S THAT SUPPORT, POP--?
POP!
AIN'T NO HELP FOR ANY OF US, TEAPY!
LET'S MAKE THIS SHORT AND SWEET, PEOPLE!
NO--!
TEAPE!
AAAAAAHH!


TEAPE! WAKE UP!
HUH--? JESS, YOU'RE--
WHERE... WHERE ARE WE?
STILL IN QUAD NINE FOUR NINER, SEARCHING FOR THAT SERVICE TERMINAL.
YOU OUGHT TO GET ELLIS TO GIVE YOU SOMETHING FOR THOSE NIGHTMARES.
NO... NO THANKS. NO DRUGS.
DON'T WANT TO END UP LIKE OLD MAX.
IF I'M LIVING IN A NIGHTMARE I WANT TO KNOW ABOUT IT.
THE MONITOR STARTED JUMPING AGAIN ABOUT FIVE MINUTES AGO.
I INCREASED THE OXYGEN LEVEL. EASED BACK ON THE SEDATIVE. THAT SEEMS TO HAVE SETTLED HIM DOWN.

HEART RATE'S DOWN, TOO. YOU RUN AN EKG?
NORMAL.
HMMM. WHEN WE GET BACK TO BASE WE BETTER PUT IN FOR A REPLACEMENT UNIT. THE LAST THING WE NEED IS OUR MAX MALFUNCTIONING ON US.
WHAT'S THE MATTER, ELLIS?
YOU TALK ABOUT HIM LIKE HE WAS -- I DON'T KNOW -- A MACHINE. LIKE THERE WASN'T A MAN IN THERE.
I GUESS IT'S EASY TO FORGET.
MAN -- WOMAN -- SOMETHING IN BETWEEN... THE FACT IS WE DON'T KNOW. BEST WE CAN SAY IS, SOMEWHERE IN THERE'S A HUMAN BEING.
GIVES ME THE CREEPS JUST THINKING ABOUT IT. WHY WOULD ANYONE VOLUNTEER TO BE LOCKED IN A BUG SUIT FOR THE REST OF THEIR LIVES?
MAYBE THEY DON'T GET A CHOICE IN THE MATTER.
LIKE YOU SAID YOURSELF, ELLIS -- WHY WOULD ANYONE VOLUNTEER?
YOU'RE SAYING THE COMPANY WOULD FORCE --?
C'MON, LARA! THEY WOULDN'T DO ANYTHING LIKE THAT!
YOU HAVE A LOT MORE FAITH IN THE COMPANY THAN I DO, PAL.

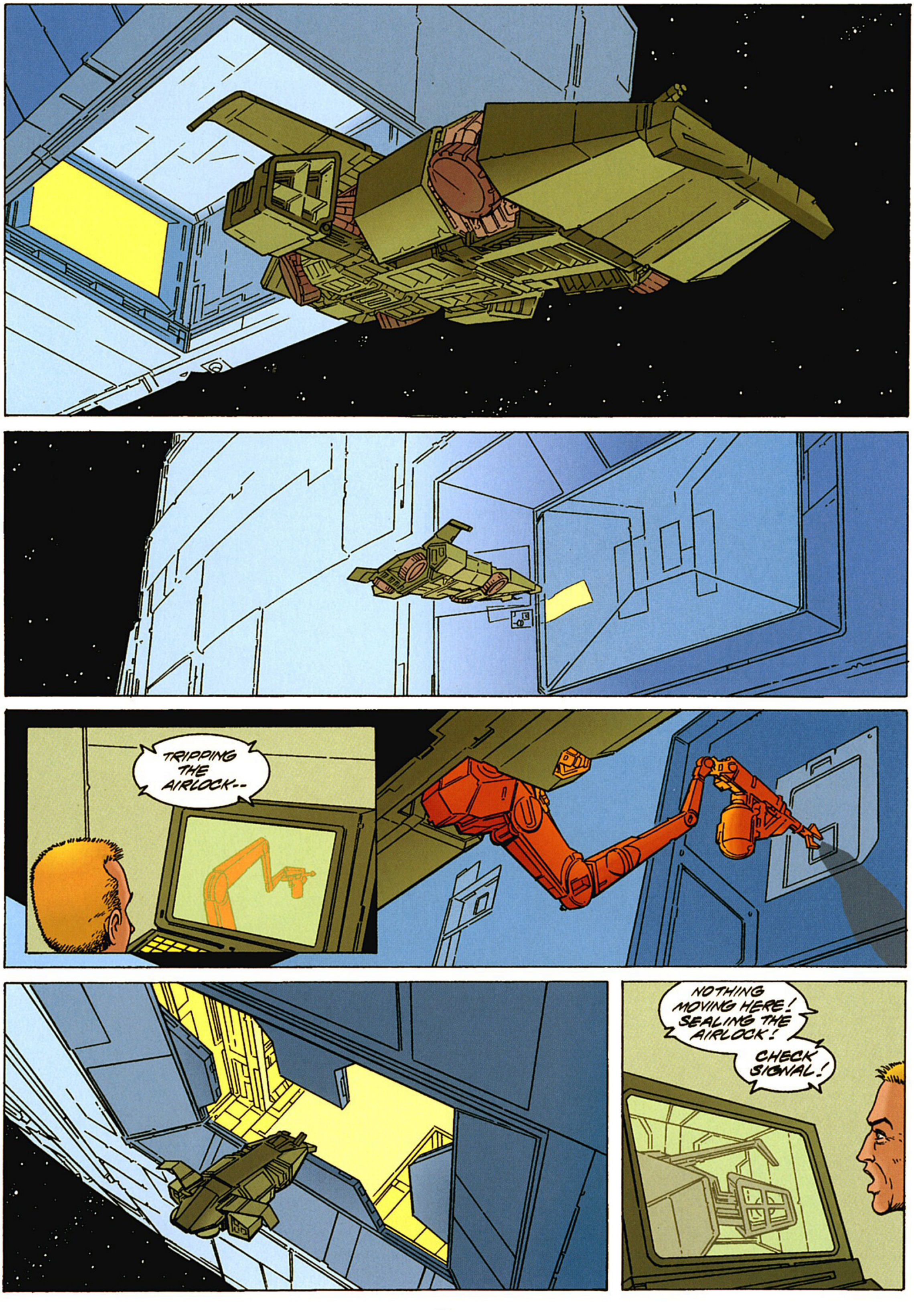

WE'RE PICKING UP A LARGE BODY ON SCAN. PRESENCE OF DEBRIS INDICATES IT COULD BE OUR TARGET.
LET'S LOOK ALIVE, PEOPLE! CREW STATIONS, THREE MINUTES!
LARA-- COMMAND DECK!
ON MY WAY.
KM 1407.5
THIS IS HUNTER/KILLER NEMESIS CALLING D.S. TERMINAL NINE FOUR NINER. RESPOND. OVER.
D.S. NINE FOUR NINER, ARE YOU RECEIVING ME? OVER.
NO SIGN OF LIFE.
D.S. NINE FOUR NINER, THIS IS HUNTER/KILLER NEMESIS. IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO TRANSMIT, INDICATE BY VISUAL SIGNAL. OVER.
VECTOR 41

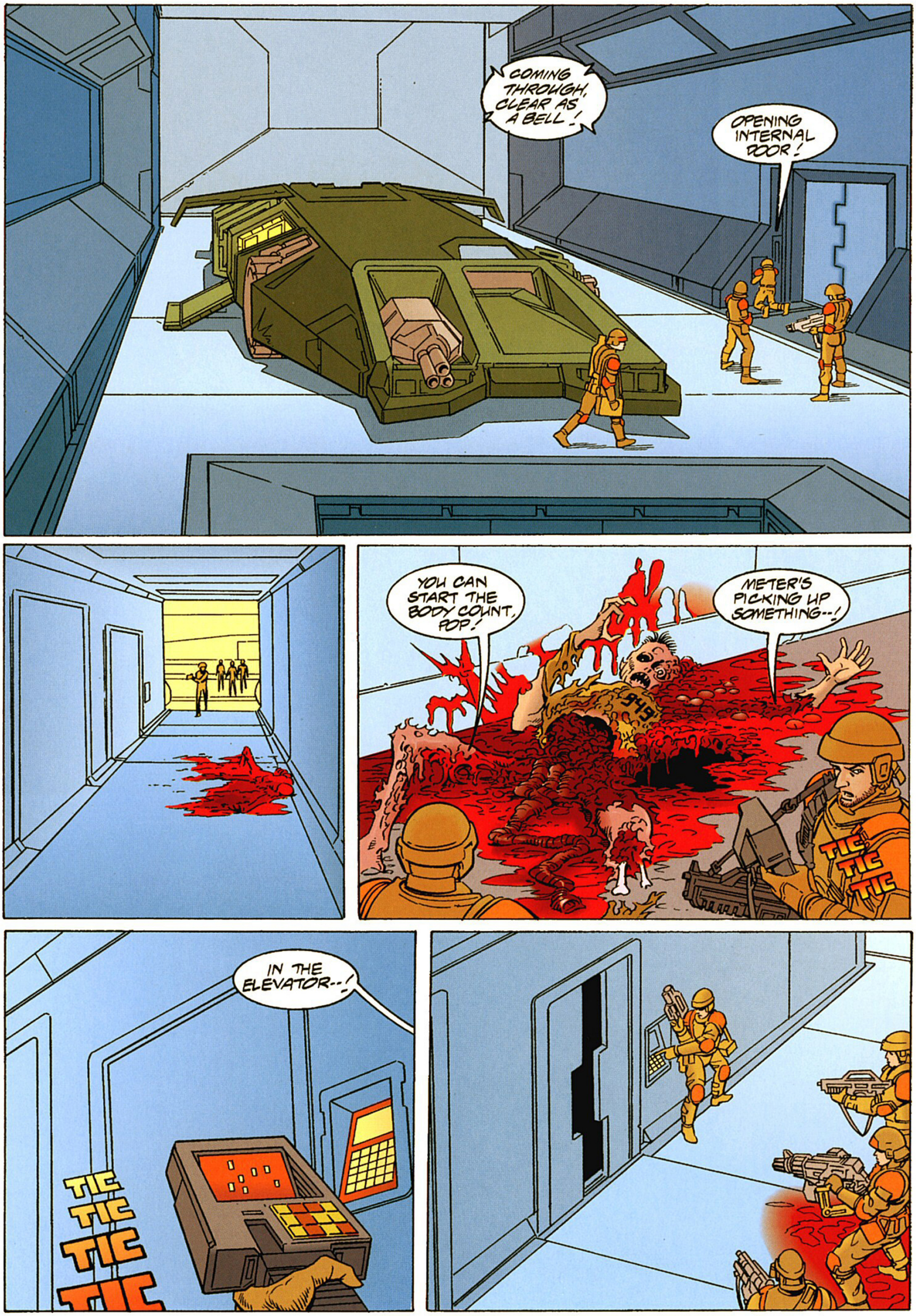

THIS IS ONE BIG MOTHER, POP!
IF BUGS WIPED THEM OUT, WE ARE TALKING *MAJOR INFESTATION!*


GETTING NO RESPONSE.
I CAN SEE ACID-BURN DAMAGE ON THE LOWER HULL.
GO IN CLOSE ON THAT BIO-DOME. THOUGHT I CAUGHT MOVEMENT--
ENHANCE'57.00 19.01
WE HAVE A LIVE ONE, PEOPLE!
LET'S TALK!

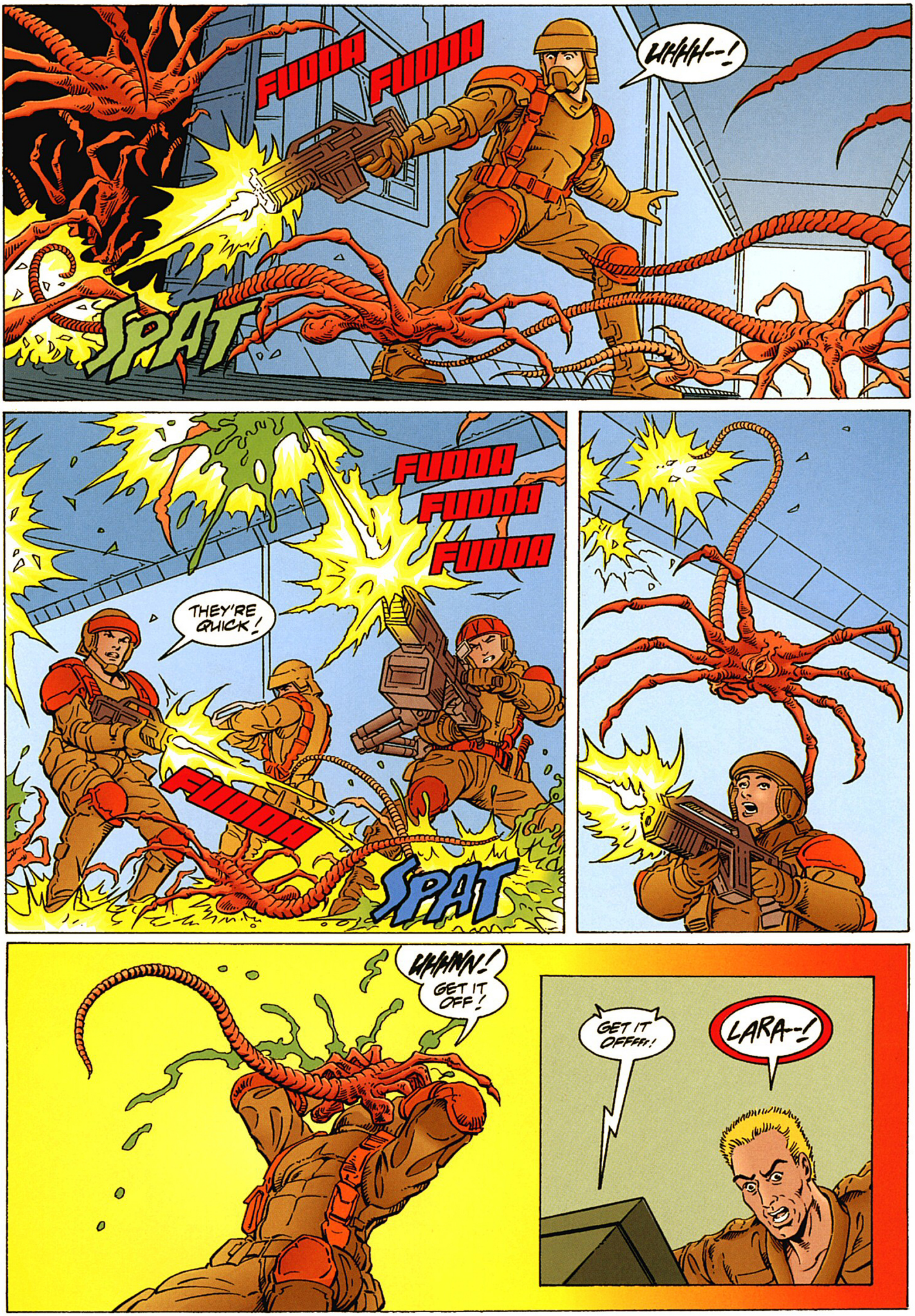
TERMINAL 949 HAS A STAFF OF FOUR HUNDRED AND CAN CATER FOR THE SAME NUMBER OF STOPOVER OR TRANSFER PASSENGERS.
IT CARRIES FULL WAREHOUSING, MEDICAL, AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES. IN ADDITION, IT IS CAPABLE OF SERVICING AND REPAIRING UP TO FOUR GALAXY CLASS VESSELS AT ONCE.
INCLUDING SHIPS' CREWS, THAT COULD BE CLOSE ON A THOUSAND PEOPLE.
YOU GET ON TO GRIGSON, POP--TELL HIM WE'RE GONNA NEED SUPPORT!
LET'S NOT JUMP THE GUN, JESS. THINK WE'D BETTER TAKE A LOOK-SEE FIRST. LARA--
THIS IS THE OUTLINE PLAN FOR A TYPICAL D.S. TERMINAL FROM OUR DATA BANKS. THE COMMAND CENTER IS LOCATED HERE, ON THE HUB.
IF WE CAN GET ABOARD AND HOOK UP A RELAY, WE CAN TAP INTO THE ENTIRE COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK.
YOU CAN HANDLE THAT, GROUND LEADER?
RECKON...
I'LL DO IT.
I'M COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER. IT'S MY JOB. I'LL DO IT.
VERY WELL.
KIT UP! YOU GO IN TWENTY MINUTES!

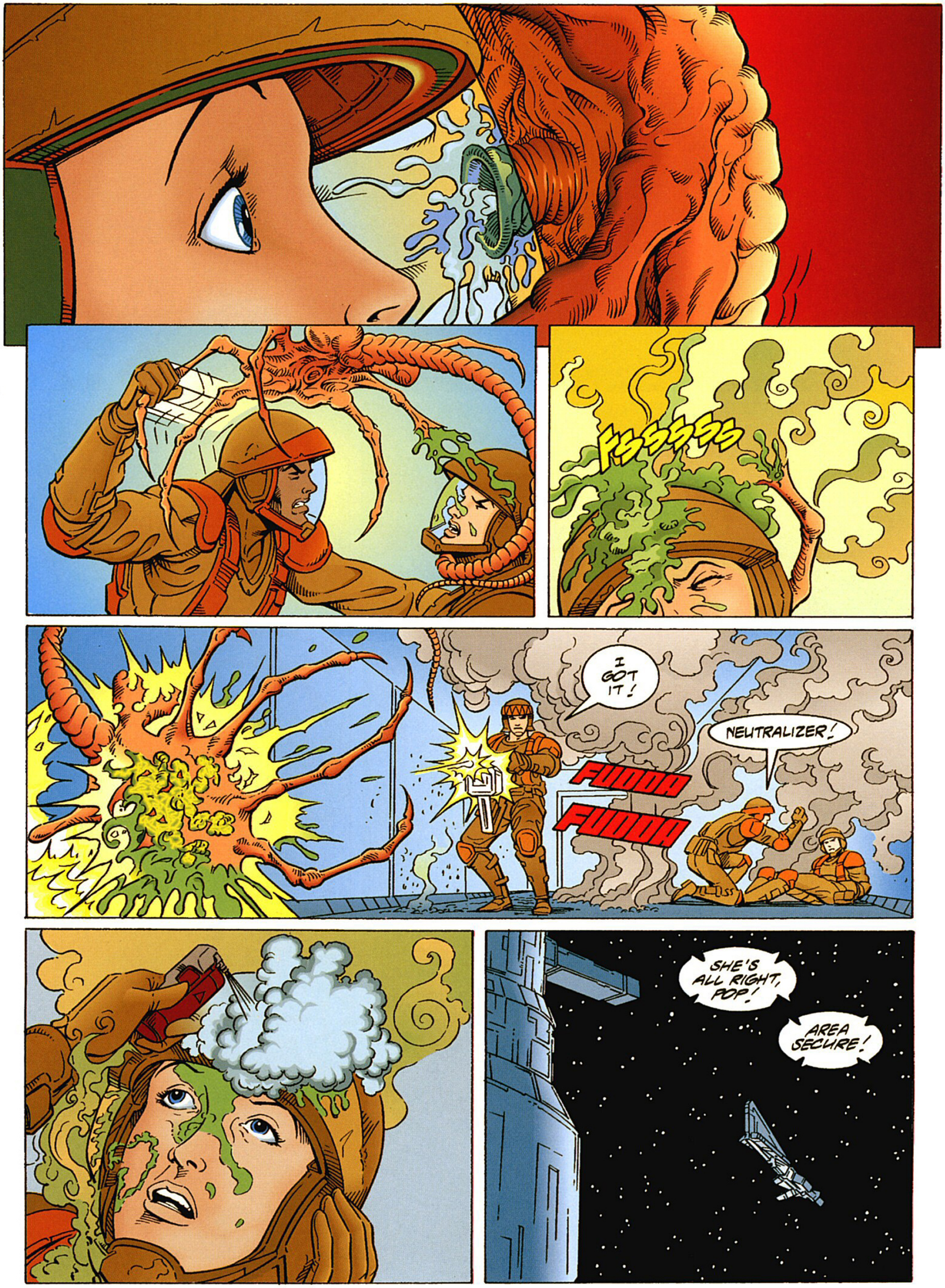
YOU'RE STILL LOOKIN' PRETTY SHAKY, MAN.
I'M OKAY.
LOW BLOOD SUGAR. THAT'S YOUR PROBLEM, TEAPY!
PULASKI
HERE--
NEVER GO INTO A FIGHT WITHOUT LOADIN' UP!
MAKES YA NICE AN' SWEET FOR ALL THE *BUGS*!
THANKS A HEAP!
LET'S SHAKE IT UP!
E
YO!
IT COULD BE DANGEROUS IN THERE. I WISH YOU'D LEAVE THIS TO JESS.
YOU KNOW I'M VERY FOND OF YOU, LARA...
I'M A BIG GIRL NOW. I CAN HANDLE IT.


TRIPPING THE AIRLOCK--
NOTHING MOVING HERE! SEALING THE AIRLOCK!
CHECK SIGNAL!

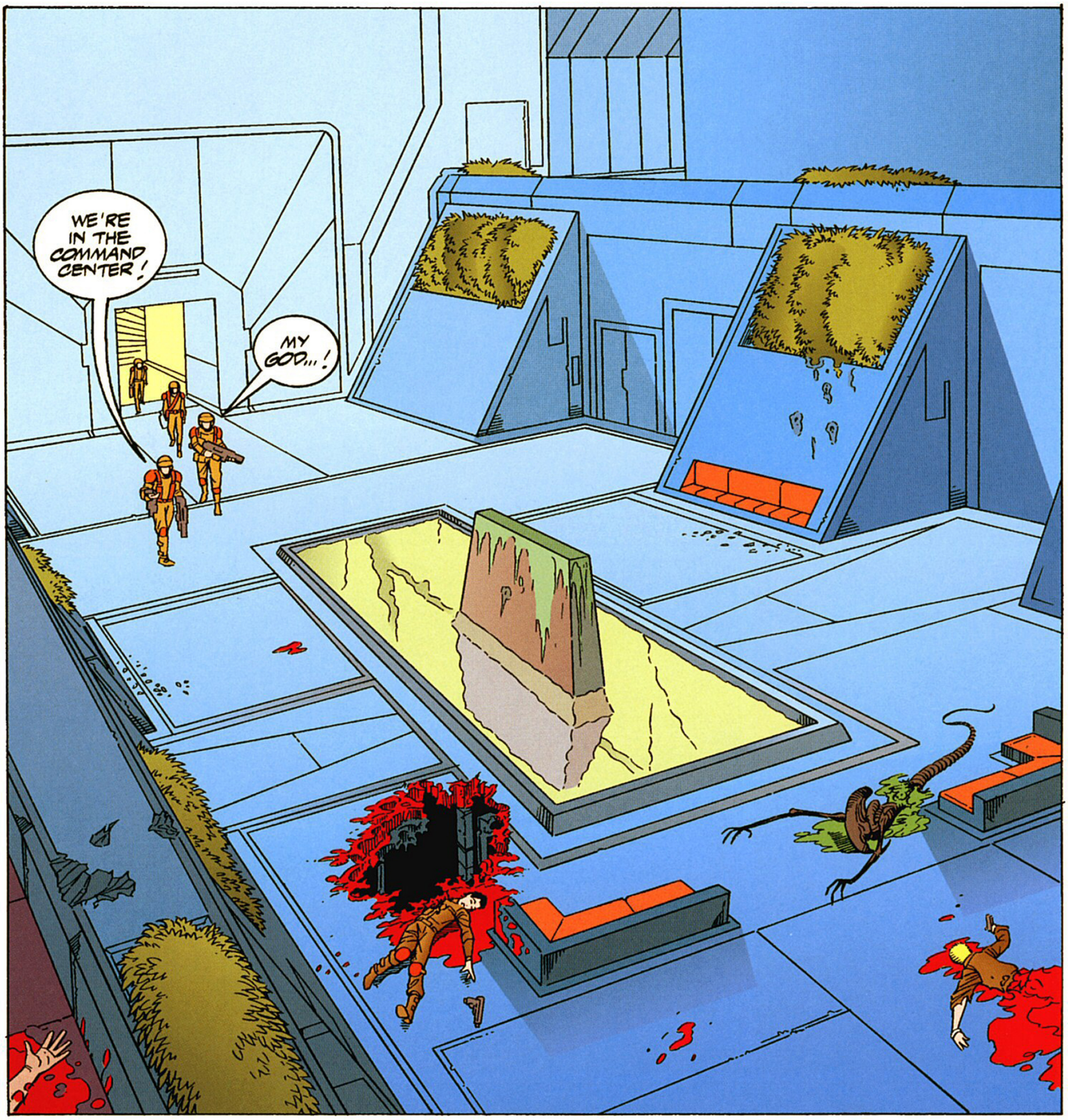

COMING THROUGH, CLEAR AS A BELL!
OPENING INTERNAL DOOR!
YOU CAN START THE BODY COUNT, POP!
METER'S PICKING UP SOMETHING--!
TIC TIC TIC
IN THE ELEVATOR--!
TIC TIC TIC TIC

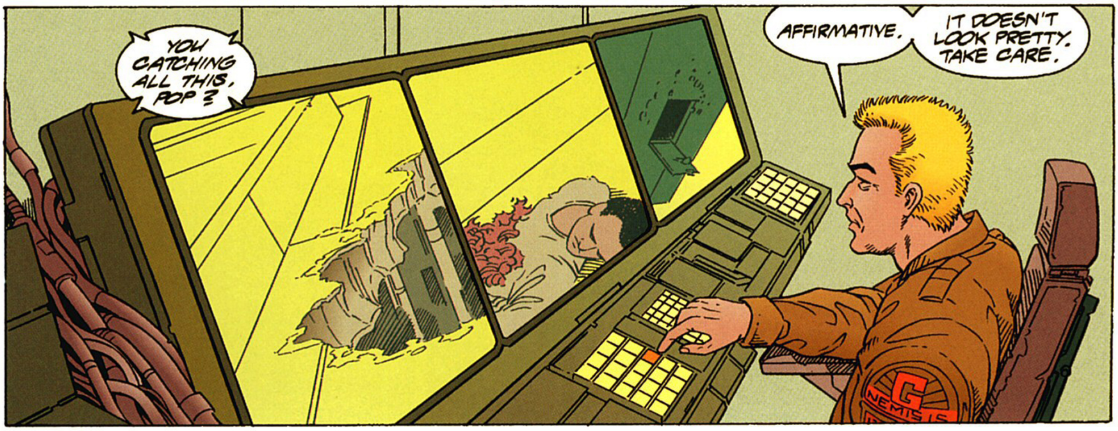
HOLY MIKE!
WE GOT A RECEPTION COMMITTEE, POP!
FUDDA FUDDA
FUDDA FUDDA
FDAM
SPATTA

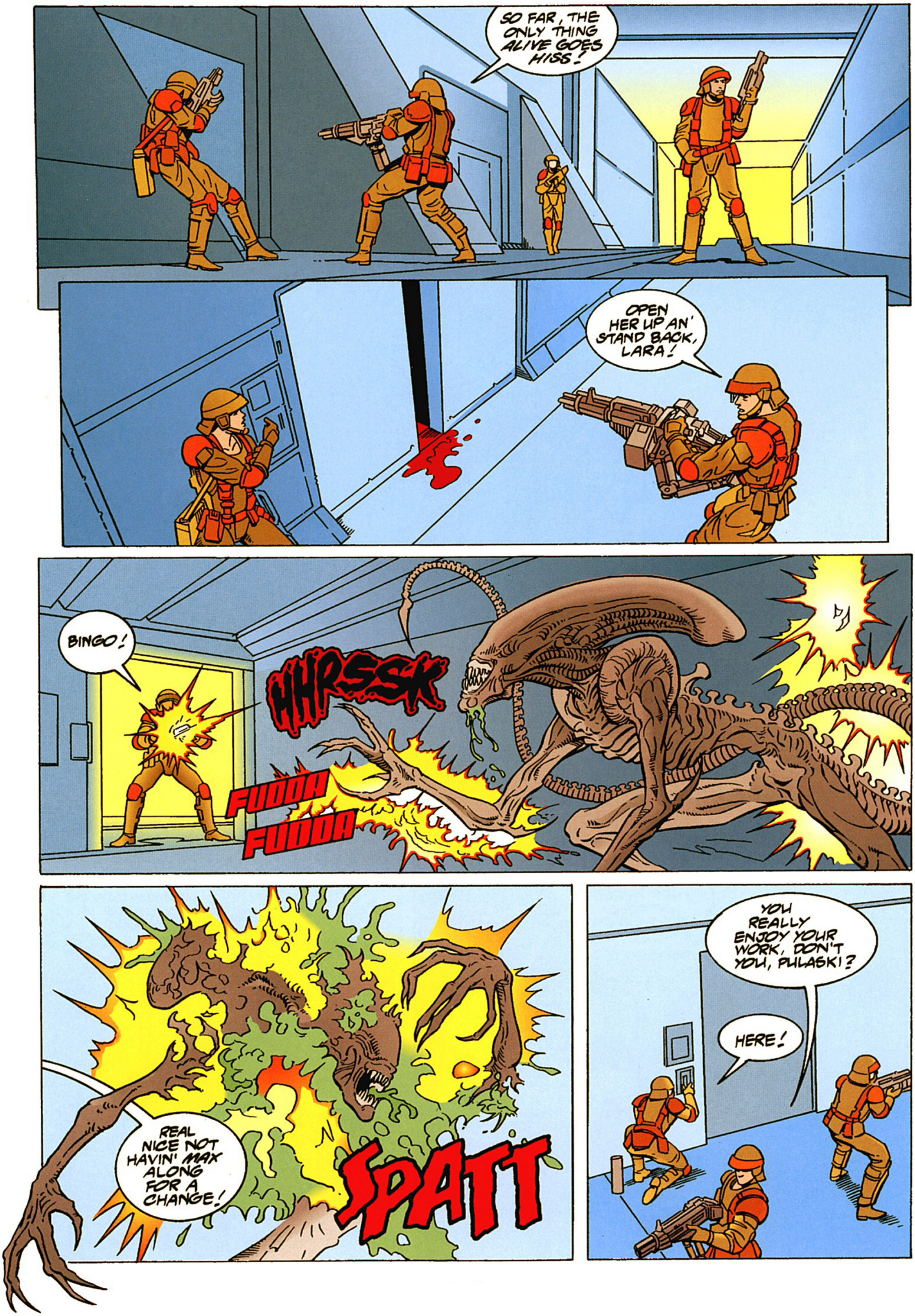

FUDDA FUDDA
UHHH--!
SPAT
FUDDA FUDDA FUDDA
THEY'RE QUICK!
FUDDA
SPAT
UHHNN! GET IT OFF!
GET IT OFFFF!
LARA--!

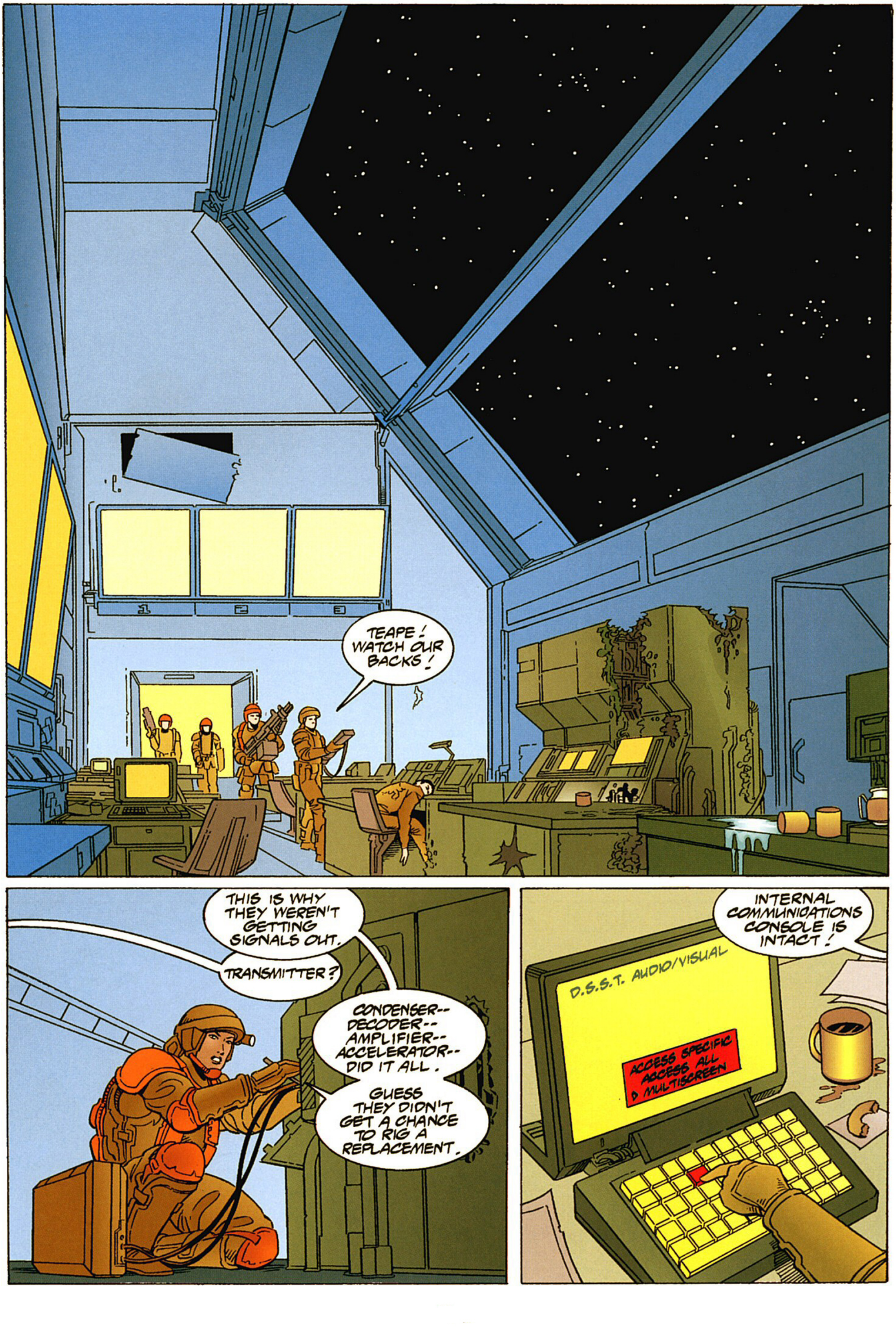

FSSSSS
I GOT IT!
NEUTRALIZER!
FUDDA
FUDDA
SHE'S ALL RIGHT, POP!
AREA SECURE!

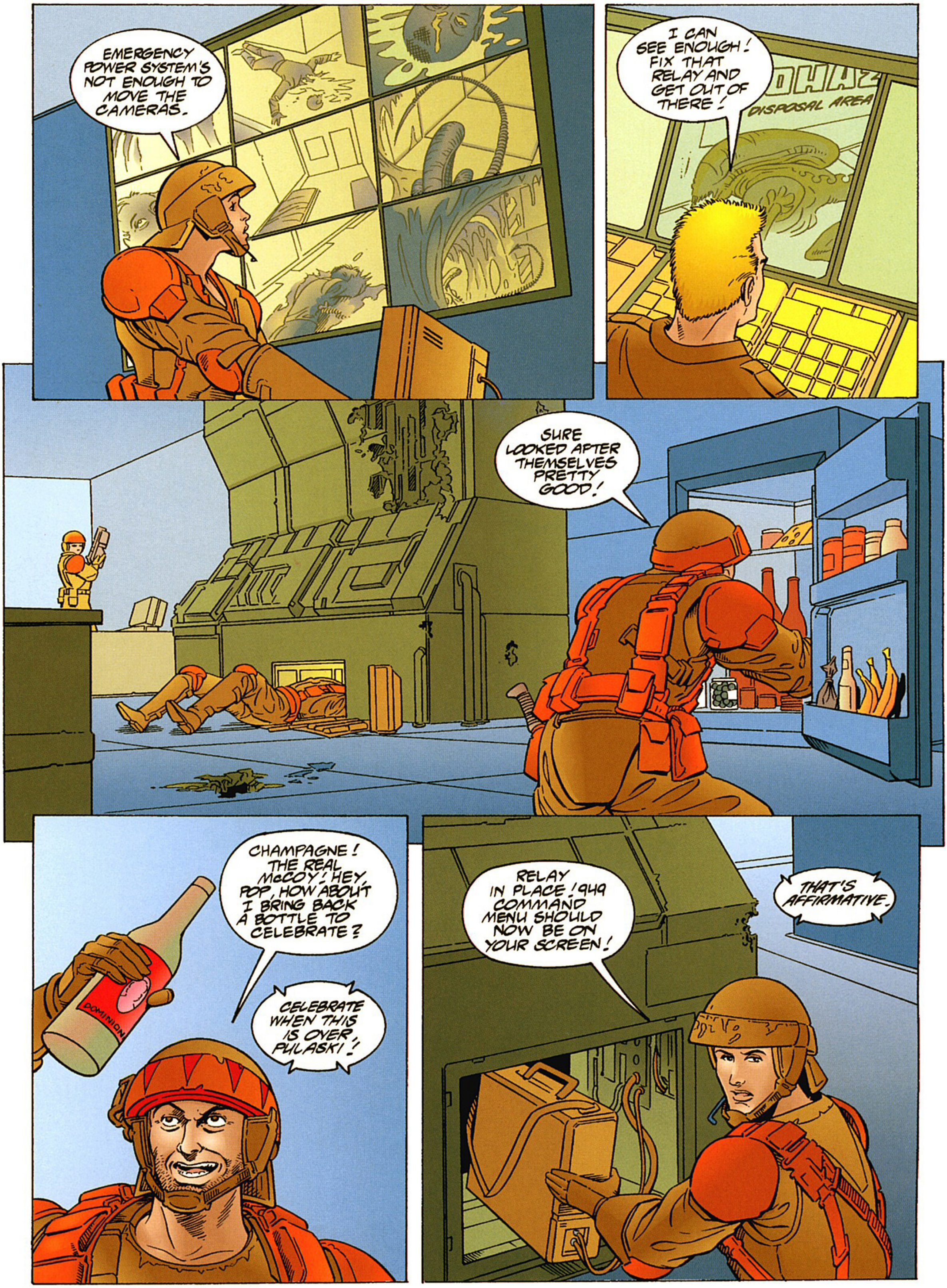
COMMAND CENTER'S TWO LEVELS DOWN.
SAFER BY THE STAIRS--
TEAPE! LEAD OFF!
TO ALL LEVELS
EAT ME
I'M PICKING UP MOVEMENT--!
HHURSK
FUDDA FUDDA
HISSSS

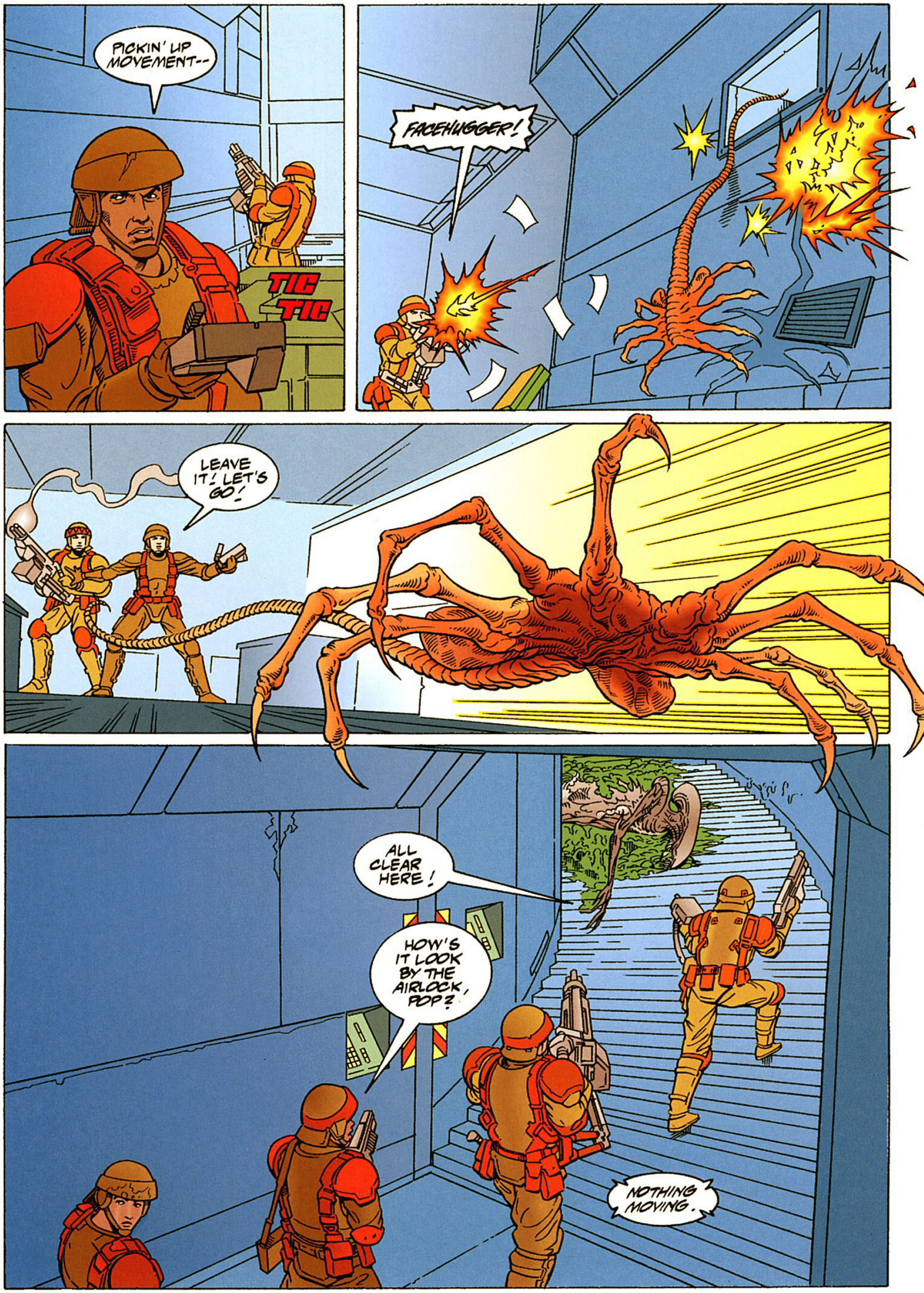

WE'RE IN THE COMMAND CENTER!
MY GOD...!


YOU CATCHING ALL THIS, POP?
AFFIRMATIVE.
IT DOESN'T LOOK PRETTY. TAKE CARE.

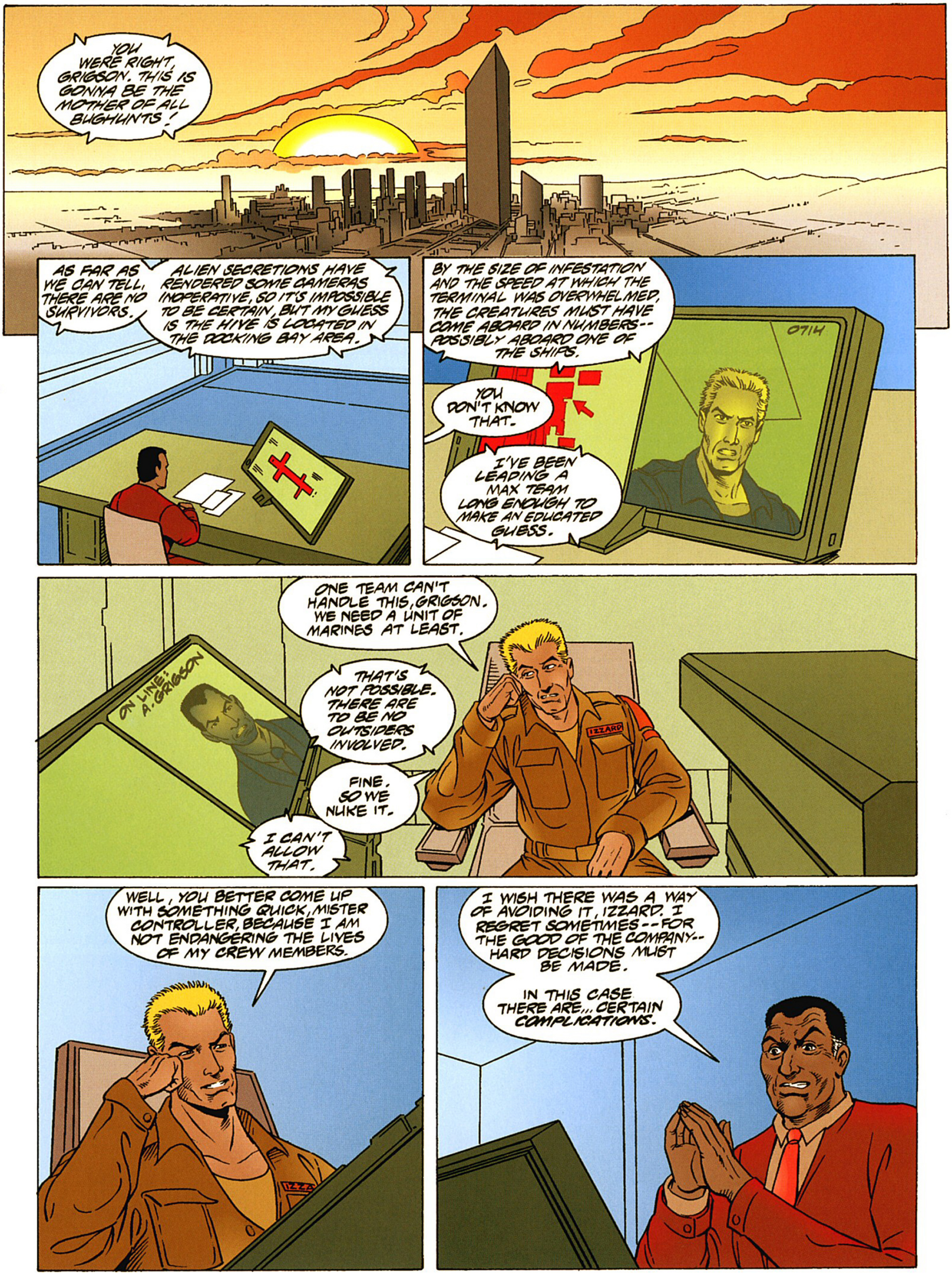

SO FAR, THE ONLY THING ALIVE GOES HISS!
OPEN HER UP AN' STAND BACK, LARA!
BINGO!
HHRSSK
FUDDA
FUDDA
REAL NICE NOT HAVIN' MAX ALONG FOR A CHANGE!
SPATT
YOU REALLY ENJOY YOUR WORK, DON'T YOU, PULASKI?
HERE!


TEAPE! WATCH OUR BACKS!
THIS IS WHY THEY WEREN'T GETTING SIGNALS OUT.
TRANSMITTER?
CONDENSER-- DECODER-- AMPLIFIER-- ACCELERATOR-- DID IT ALL.
GUESS THEY DIDN'T GET A CHANCE TO RIG A REPLACEMENT.
INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS CONSOLE IS INTACT!
D.S.S.T. AUDIO/VISUAL
ACCESS SPECIFIC
ACCESS ALL
MULTISCREEN

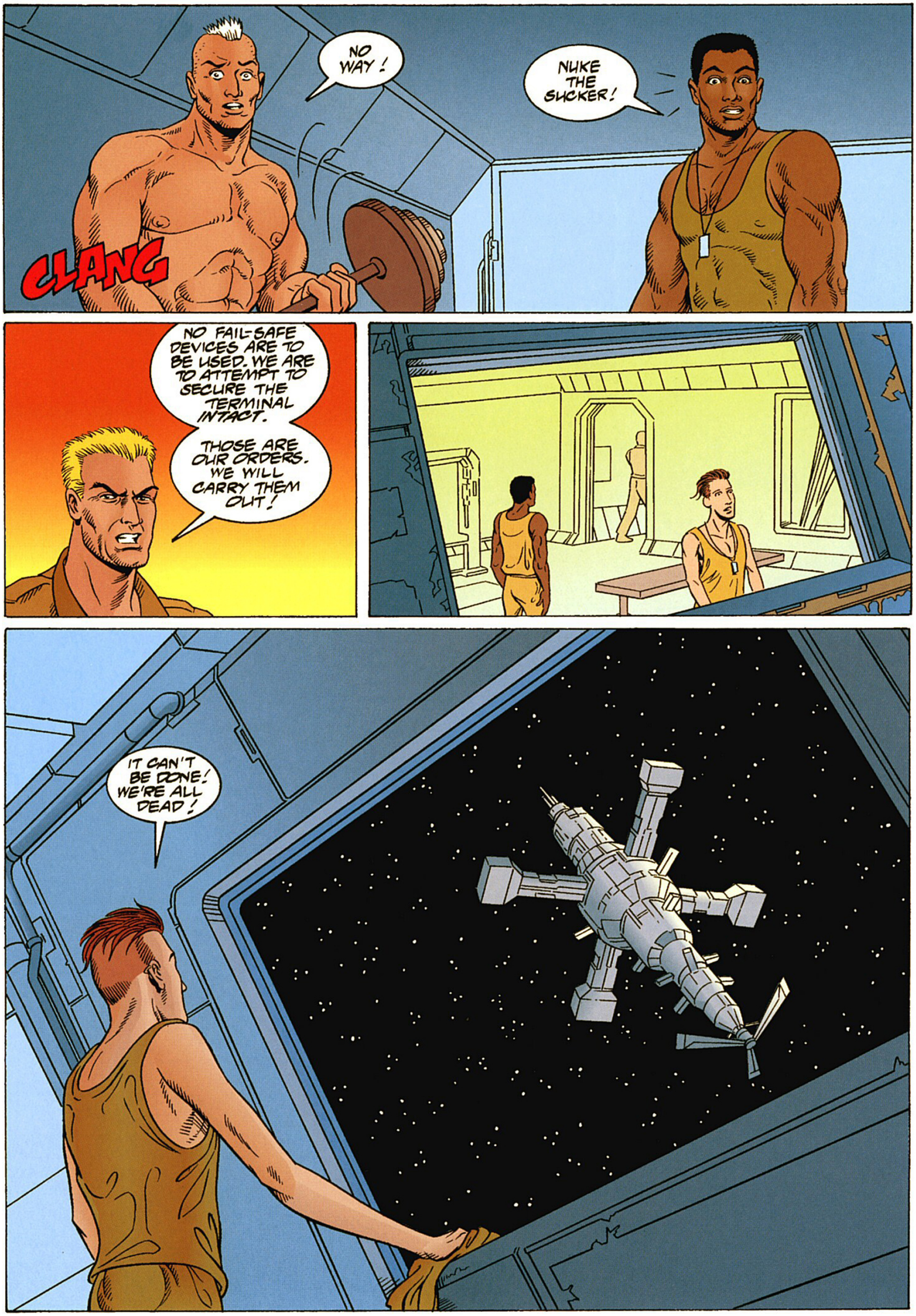

EMERGENCY POWER SYSTEM'S NOT ENOUGH TO MOVE THE CAMERAS.
I CAN SEE ENOUGH! FIX THAT RELAY AND GET OUT OF THERE!
DISPOSAL AREA
SURE LOOKED AFTER THEMSELVES PRETTY GOOD!
CHAMPAGNE! THE REAL McCOY! HEY, POP, HOW ABOUT I BRING BACK A BOTTLE TO CELEBRATE?
CELEBRATE WHEN THIS IS OVER, PULASKI!
DOMINION
RELAY IN PLACE! 949 COMMAND MENU SHOULD NOW BE ON YOUR SCREEN!
THAT'S AFFIRMATIVE.


PICKIN' UP MOVEMENT--
TIC TIC
FACEHUGGER!
LEAVE IT! LET'S GO!
ALL CLEAR HERE!
HOW'S IT LOOK BY THE AIRLOCK, POP?
NOTHING MOVING.

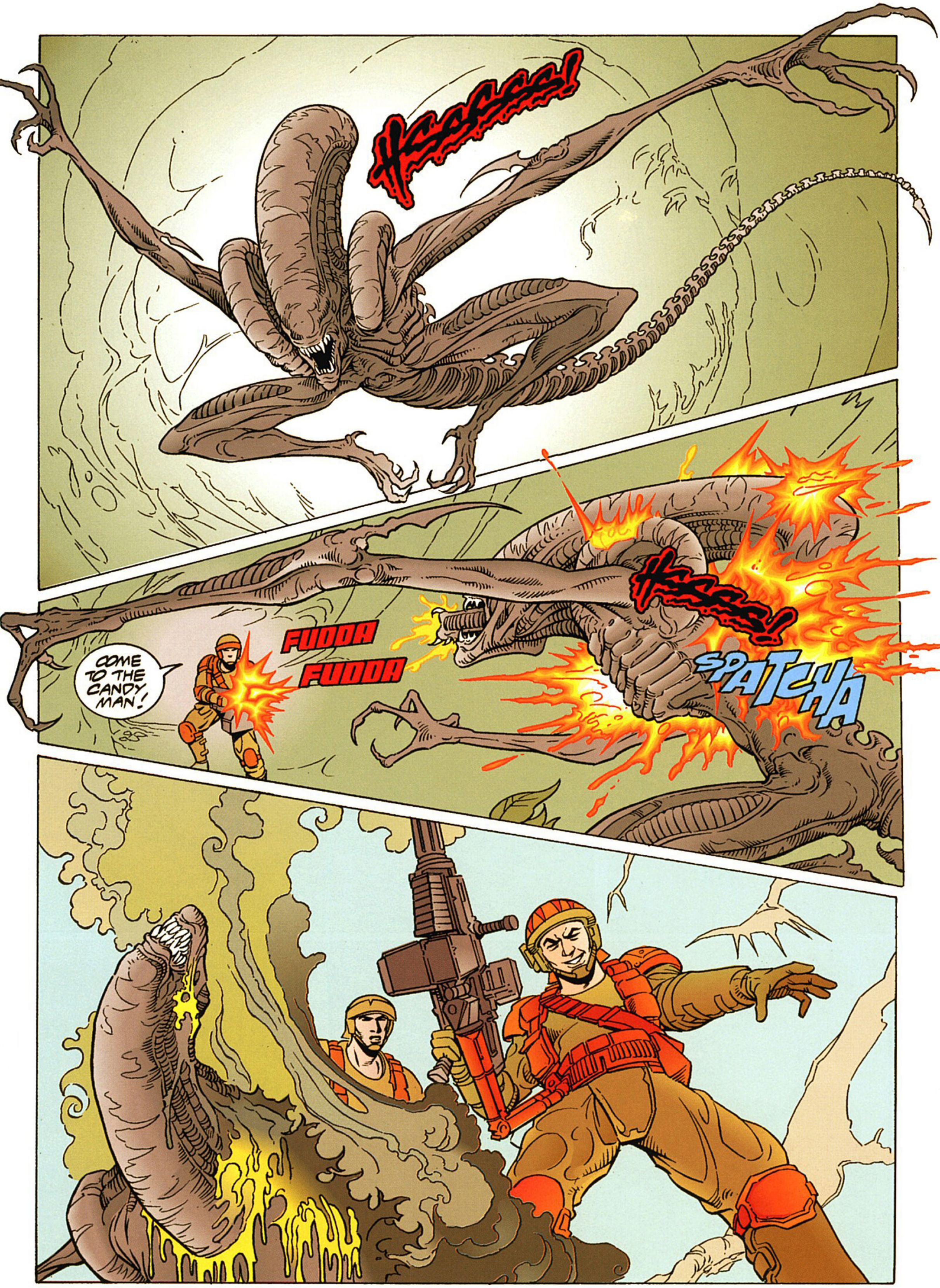
HUURSK
FUDDA
FUDDA
FUDDA
FUDDA
WAY TO GO, LARA. BLEW THAT SUCKER TO BUG HEAVEN!
SORRY. SHOULD'VE MADE SURE.


YOU WERE RIGHT, GRIGSON. THIS IS GONNA BE THE MOTHER OF ALL BUGHUNTS!
AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL, THERE ARE NO SURVIVORS.
ALIEN SECRETIONS HAVE RENDERED SOME CAMERAS INOPERATIVE, SO IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO BE CERTAIN, BUT MY GUESS IS THE HIVE IS LOCATED IN THE DOCKING BAY AREA.
BY THE SIZE OF INFESTATION AND THE SPEED AT WHICH THE TERMINAL WAS OVERWHELMED, THE CREATURES MUST HAVE COME ABOARD IN NUMBERS-- POSSIBLY ABOARD ONE OF THE SHIPS.
0714
YOU DON'T KNOW THAT.
I'VE BEEN LEADING A MAX TEAM LONG ENOUGH TO MAKE AN EDUCATED GUESS.
ONE TEAM CAN'T HANDLE THIS, GRIGSON. WE NEED A UNIT OF MARINES AT LEAST.
ON LINE: A. GRIGSON
IZZARD
THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE. THERE ARE TO BE NO OUTSIDERS INVOLVED.
FINE. SO WE NUKE IT.
I CAN'T ALLOW THAT.
WELL, YOU BETTER COME UP WITH SOMETHING QUICK, MISTER CONTROLLER, BECAUSE I AM NOT ENDANGERING THE LIVES OF MY CREW MEMBERS.
I WISH THERE WAS A WAY OF AVOIDING IT, IZZARD. I REGRET SOMETIMES--FOR THE GOOD OF THE COMPANY-- HARD DECISIONS MUST BE MADE.
IN THIS CASE THERE ARE... CERTAIN COMPLICATIONS.

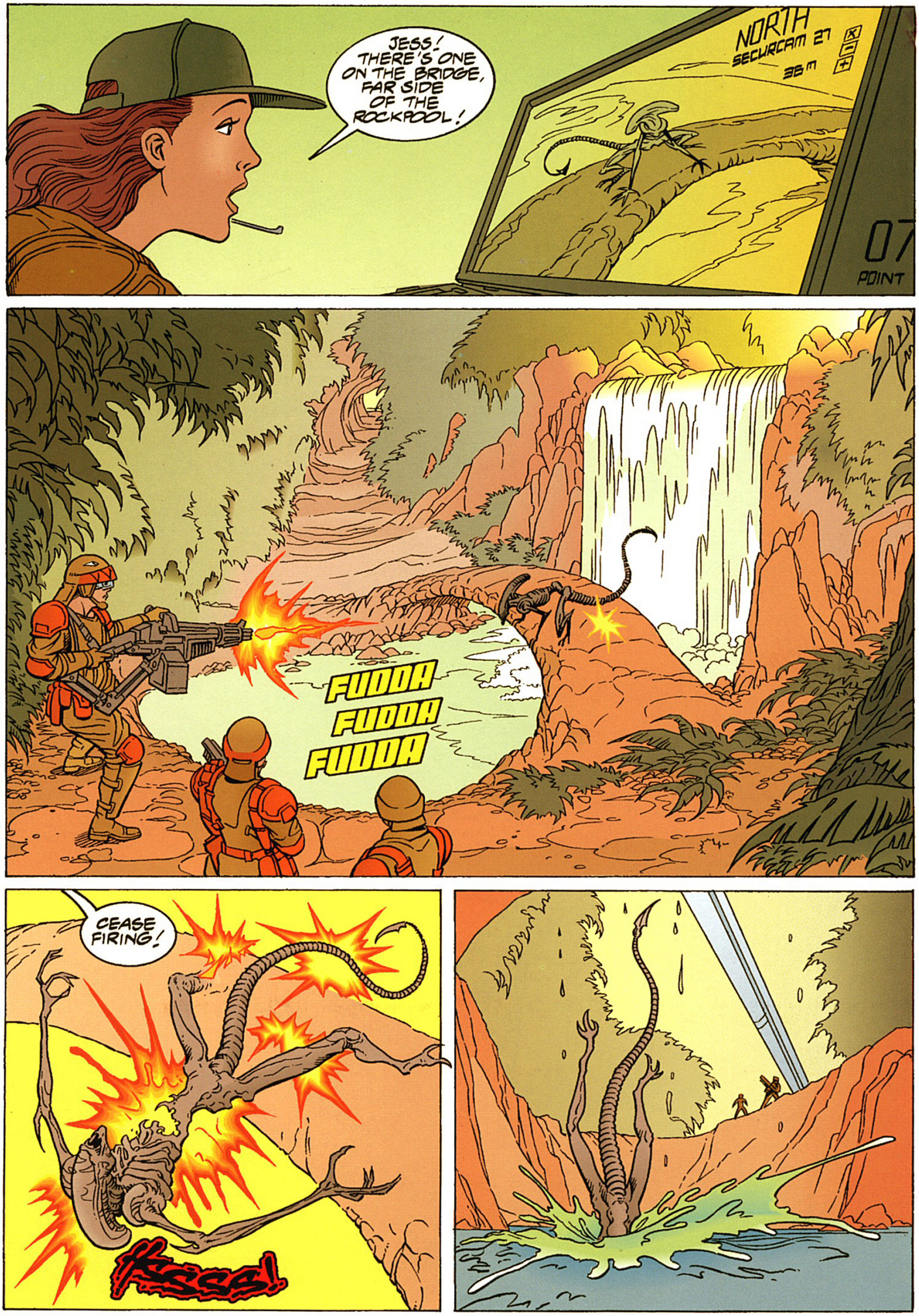
SWITCH TO SCRAMBLER. THIS IS FOR YOUR EARS ONLY.
IS THAT RIGHT, TEAPE-- YOU JOINED UP TO GET OUT OF JAIL?
WHAT DID YOU DO?
NOTHING BAD ENOUGH TO DESERVE THIS, THAT'S FOR SURE!
OL' WESLEY WAS A FIRM BELIEVER IN THE REDISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH-- MAINLY FROM OTHER PEOPLE TO HIM! HE FIGURED THIRTY RUNS WITH A MAX CREW BEAT FIFTEEN YEARS INSIDE--
COMPANY DIDN'T WARN HIM ABOUT THE FINER POINTS OF THE JOB!
HEY, POP, YOU GIVE GRIGSON THE BAD NEWS?
WHEN DOES THE CAVALRY GET HERE?
THE CAVALRY'S NOT COMING. WE'RE ON OUR OWN.

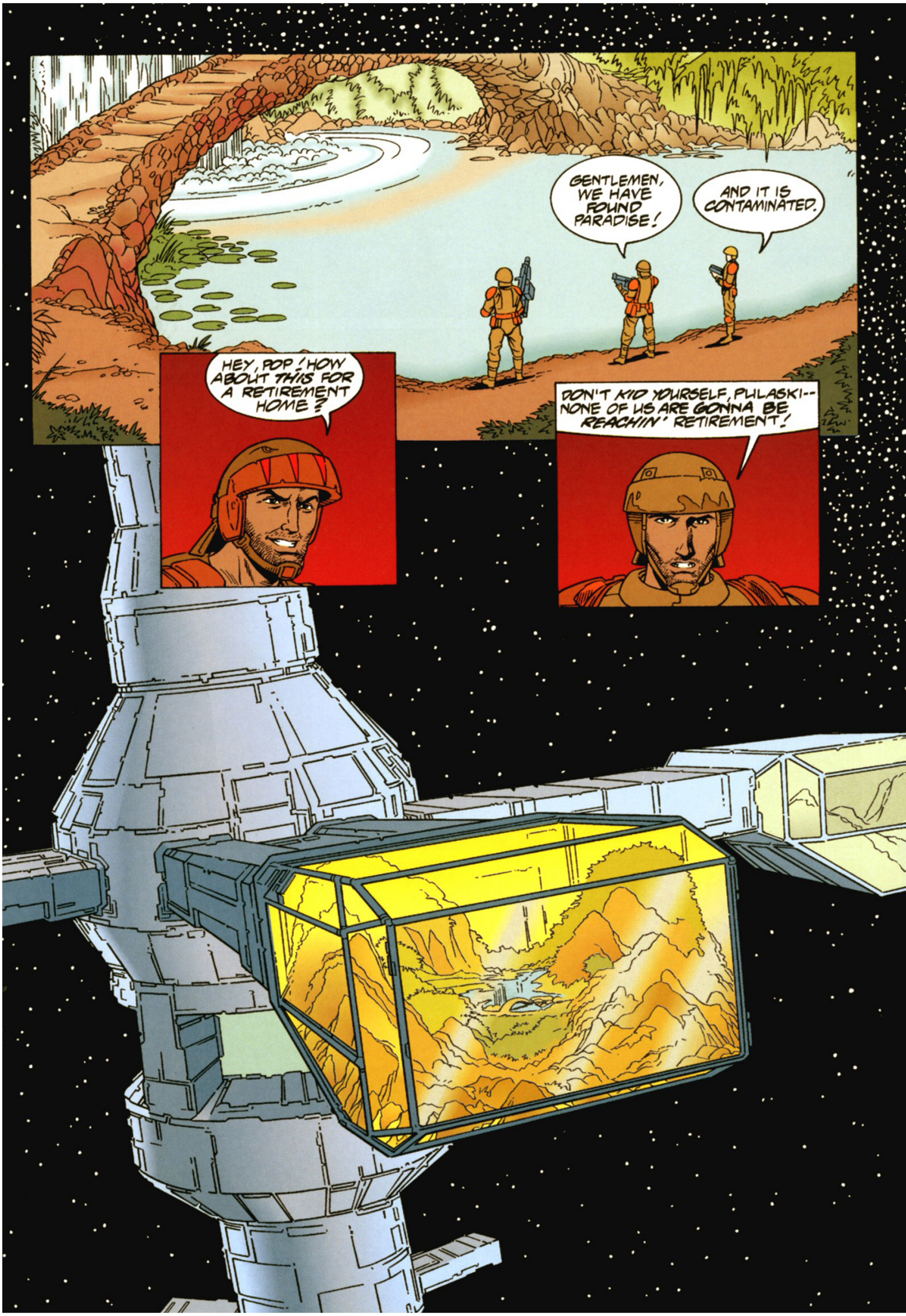

CLANG
NO WAY!
NUKE THE SUCKER!
NO FAIL-SAFE DEVICES ARE TO BE USED. WE ARE TO ATTEMPT TO SECURE THE TERMINAL INTACT.
THOSE ARE OUR ORDERS. WE WILL CARRY THEM OUT!
IT CAN'T BE DONE! WE'RE ALL DEAD!

BIP BIP
SKWARK
JESS! COMING YOUR WAY FAST! RANGE 030 AND CLOSING!
0.30
HSSSS
EYES RIGHT!
C'MON, SWEET BABY--!

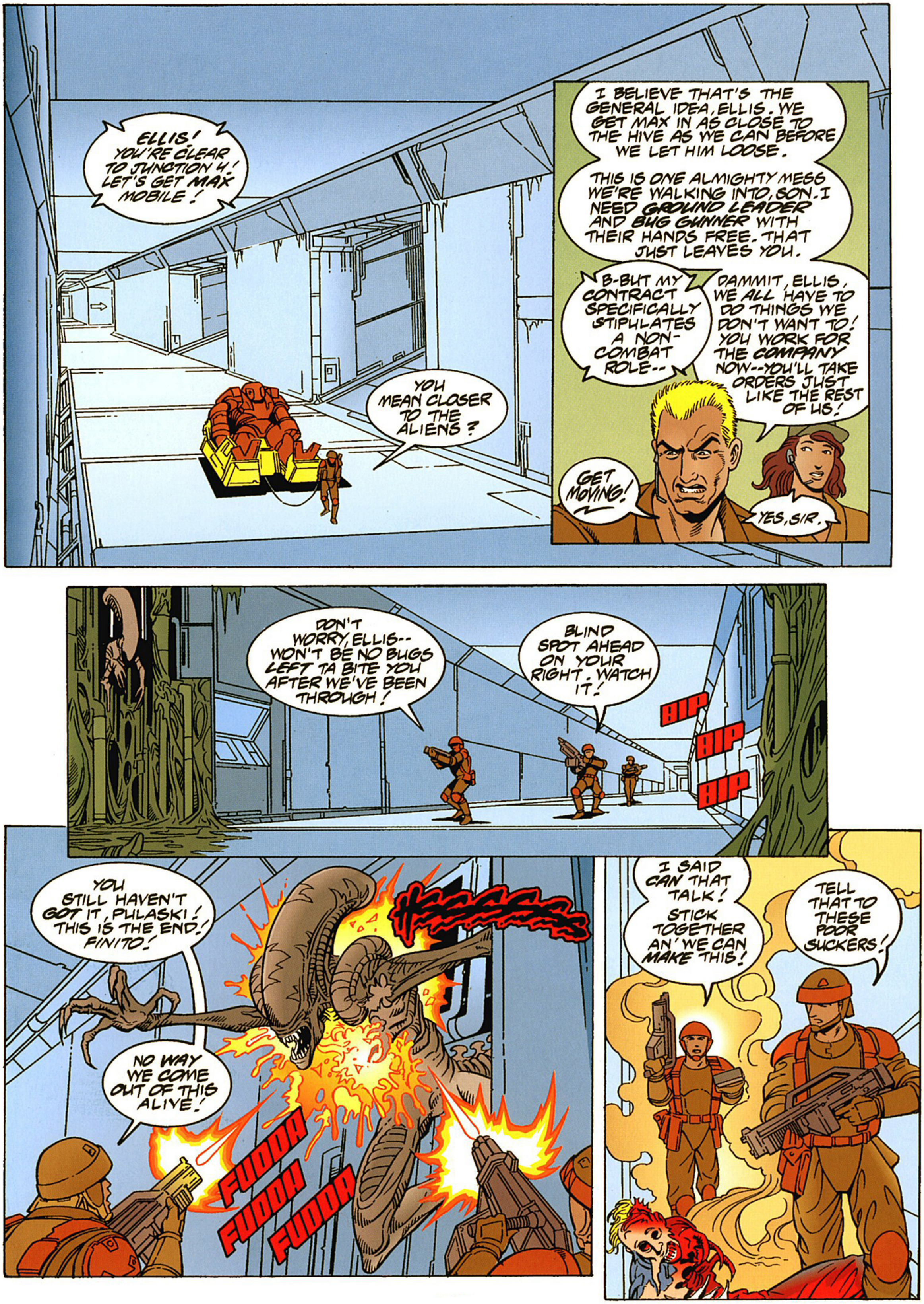


Hsssss!
COME TO THE CANDY MAN!
FUDDA FUDDA
Hssss!
SPATCHA

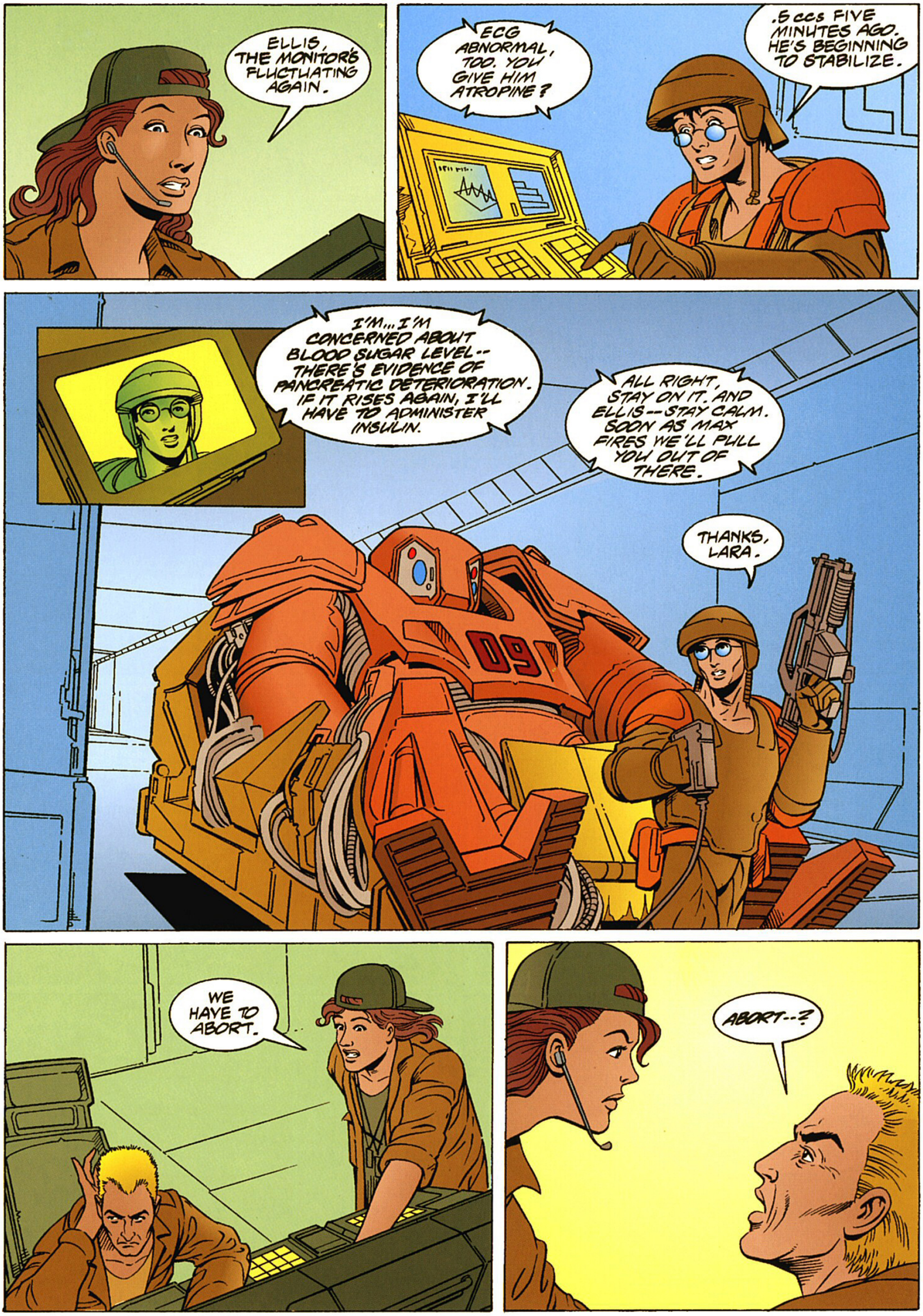

JESS! THERE'S ONE ON THE BRIDGE, FAR SIDE OF THE ROCKPOOL!
NORTH
SECURCAM 27
36m
07
POINT
FUDDA FUDDA FUDDA
CEASE FIRING!
HSSS!


GENTLEMEN, WE HAVE FOUND PARADISE!
AND IT IS CONTAMINATED.
HEY, POP! HOW ABOUT THIS FOR A RETIREMENT HOME?
DON'T KID YOURSELF, PULASKI-- NONE OF US ARE GONNA BE REACHIN' RETIREMENT!

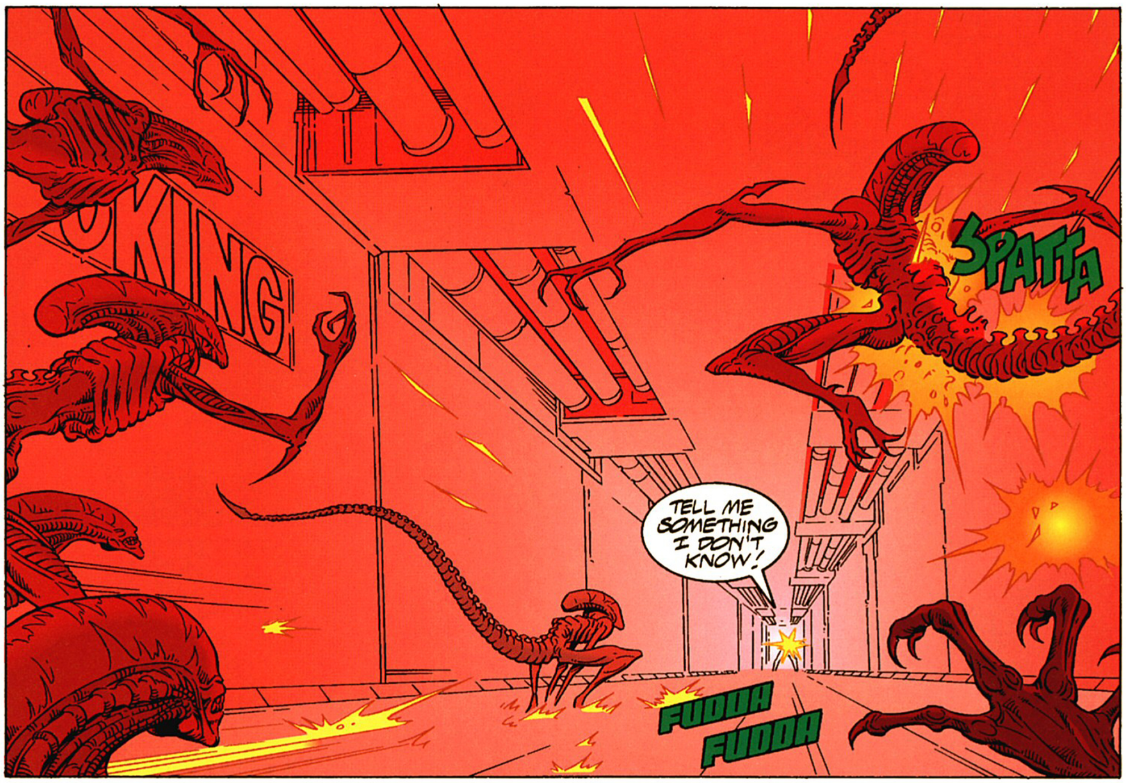
STOW THAT NEGATIVE JIVE, TEAPE!
NOTHIN' ELSE MOVING, POP! LOOKS ALL CLEAR!
CONFIRM. NOTHING ON SECURITY CAM.
'KAY, KIDDIES, SCRATCH OFF THE TROPIDOME! BACK OFF, SEAL UP, AND KEEP MOVING!

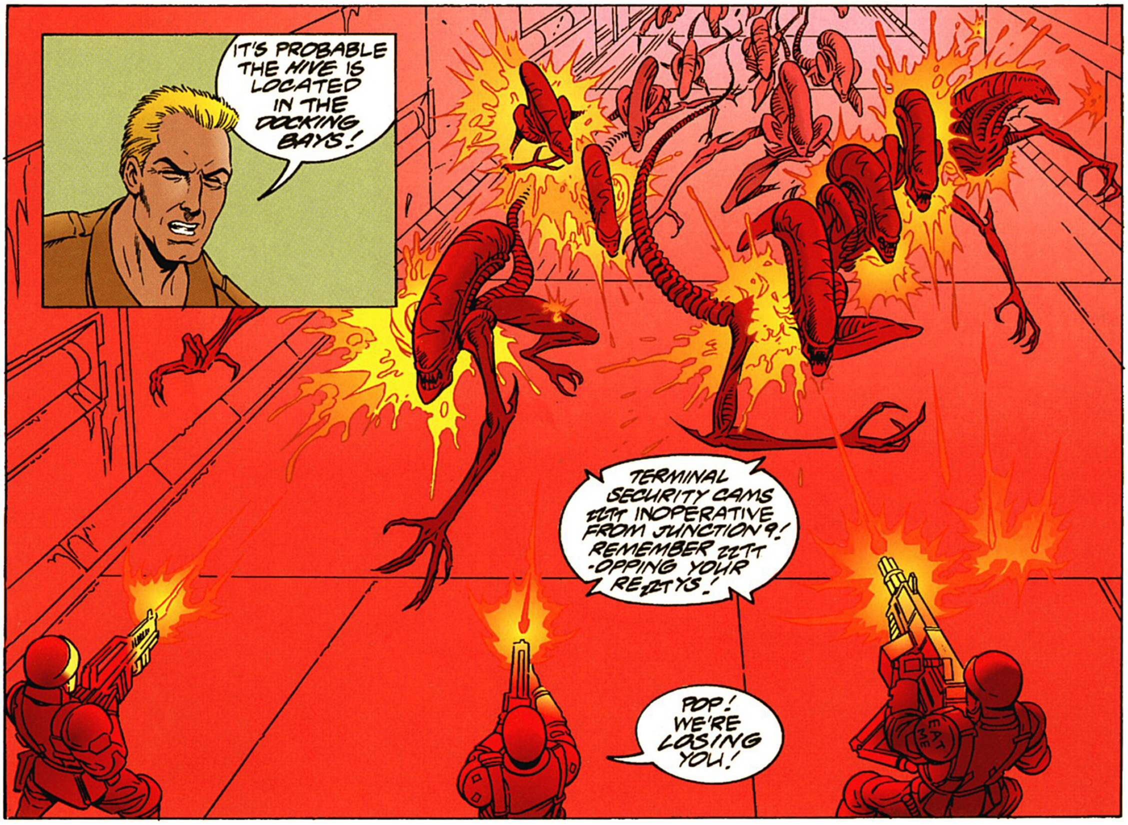


ELLIS! YOU'RE CLEAR TO JUNCTION 4! LET'S GET MAX MOBILE!
YOU MEAN CLOSER TO THE ALIENS?
I BELIEVE THAT'S THE GENERAL IDEA, ELLIS. WE GET MAX IN AS CLOSE TO THE HIVE AS WE CAN BEFORE WE LET HIM LOOSE.
THIS IS ONE ALMIGHTY MESS WE'RE WALKING INTO, SON. I NEED GROUND LEADER AND BUG GUNNER WITH THEIR HANDS FREE. THAT JUST LEAVES YOU.
B-BUT MY CONTRACT SPECIFICALLY STIPULATES A NON-COMBAT ROLE--
DAMMIT, ELLIS, WE ALL HAVE TO DO THINGS WE DON'T WANT TO! YOU WORK FOR THE COMPANY NOW--YOU'LL TAKE ORDERS JUST LIKE THE REST OF US!
GET MOVING!
YES, SIR.
DON'T WORRY, ELLIS-- WON'T BE NO BUGS LEFT TA BITE YOU AFTER WE'VE BEEN THROUGH!
BLIND SPOT AHEAD ON YOUR RIGHT. WATCH IT!
BIP
BIP
BIP
YOU STILL HAVEN'T GOT IT, PULASKI! THIS IS THE END! FINITO!
NO WAY WE COME OUT OF THIS ALIVE!
FUDDA
FUDDA
FUDDA
I SAID CAN THAT TALK! STICK TOGETHER AN' WE CAN MAKE THIS!
TELL THAT TO THESE POOR SUCKERS!

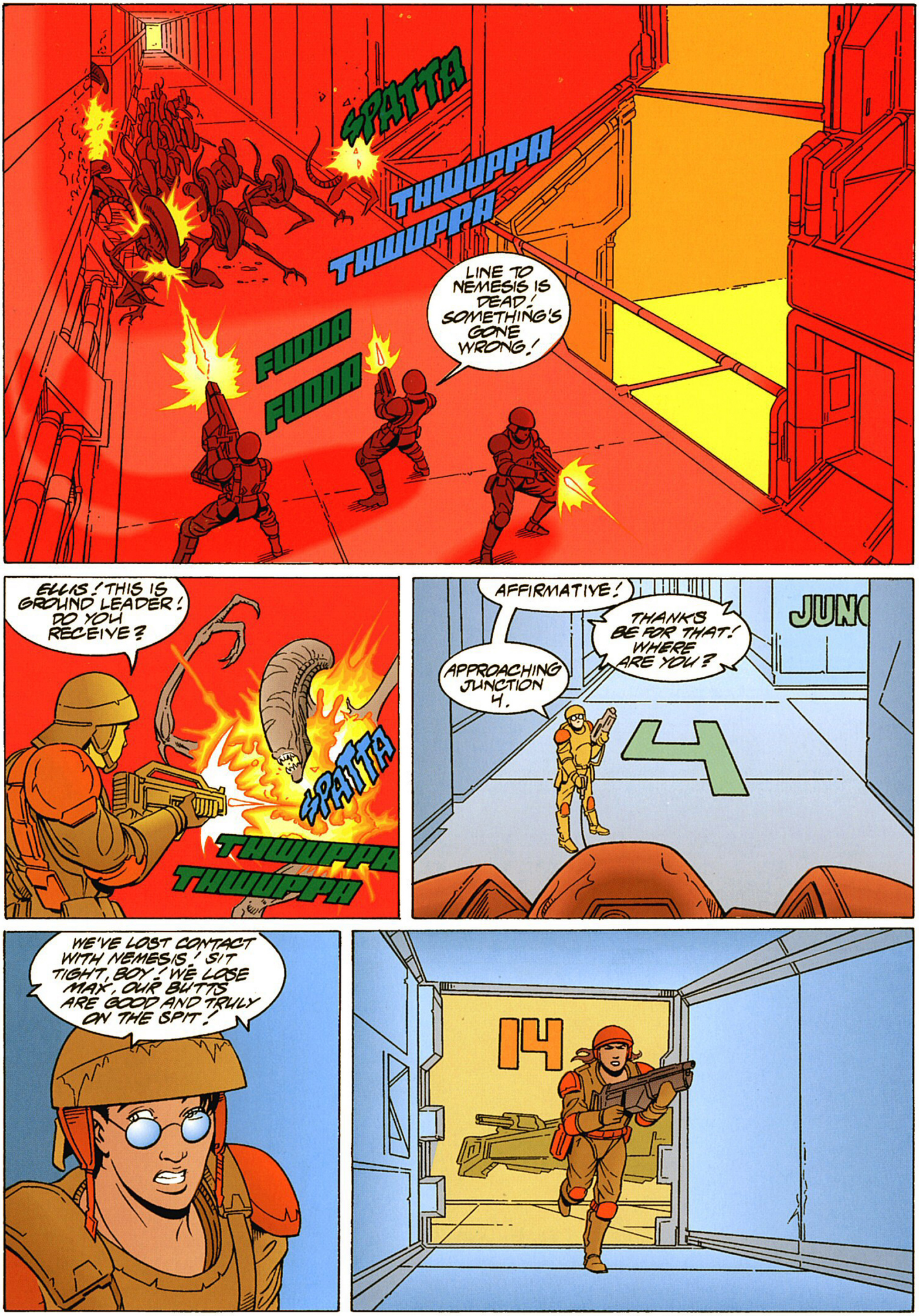

ELLIS, THE MONITOR'S FLUCTUATING AGAIN.
ECG ABNORMAL, TOO. YOU GIVE HIM ATROPINE?
.5 ccs FIVE MINUTES AGO. HE'S BEGINNING TO STABILIZE.
I'M... I'M CONCERNED ABOUT BLOOD SUGAR LEVEL-- THERE'S EVIDENCE OF PANCREATIC DETERIORATION. IF IT RISES AGAIN, I'LL HAVE TO ADMINISTER INSULIN.
ALL RIGHT, STAY ON IT. AND ELLIS-- STAY CALM. SOON AS MAX FIRES WE'LL PULL YOU OUT OF THERE.
THANKS, LARA.
09
WE HAVE TO ABORT.
ABORT--?

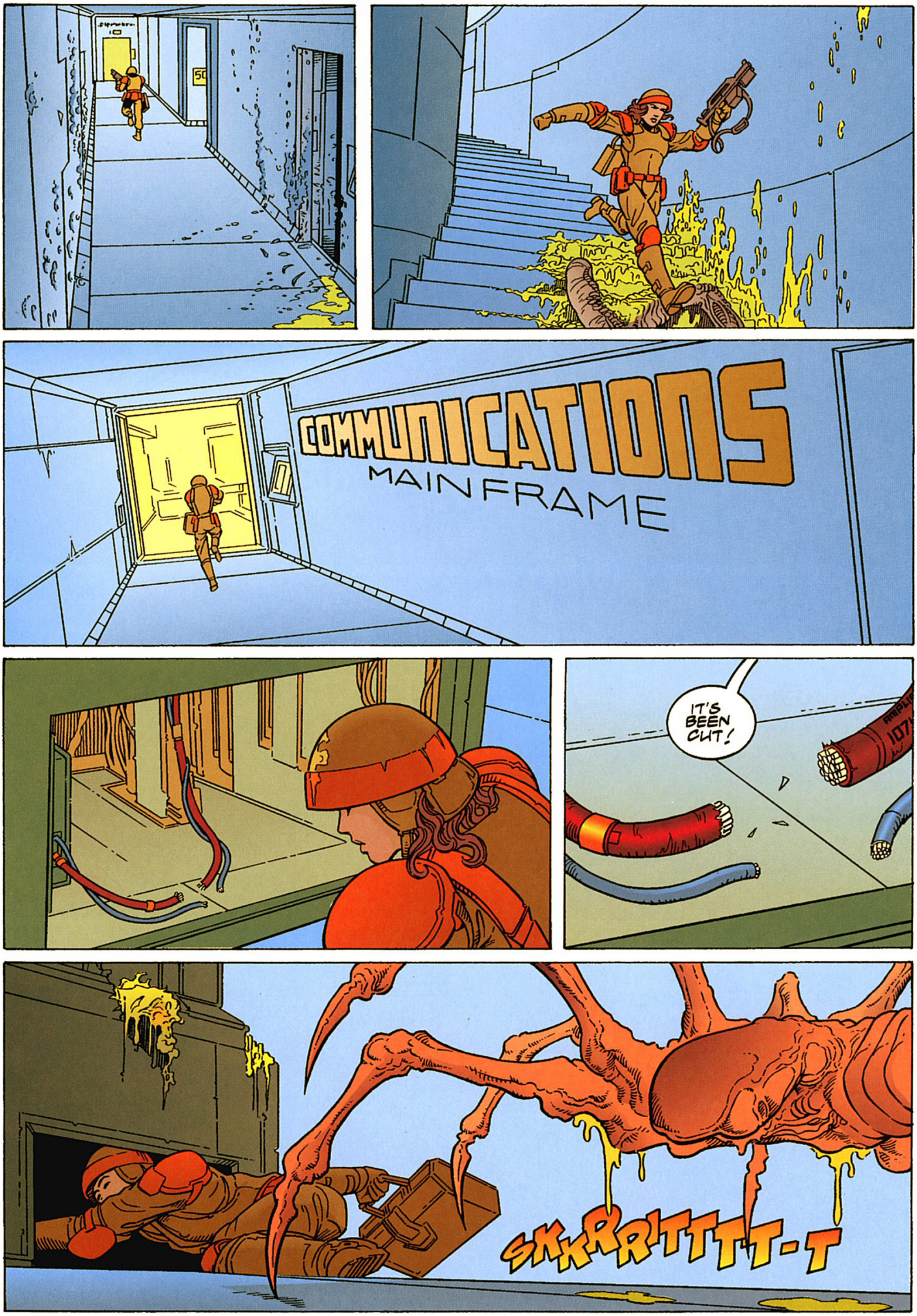
MAX IS SICK. I THINK HE IS DYING.
WE'RE KEEPING HIM GOING WITH DRUGS, BUT HOW MUCH LONGER HE'LL LAST I DON'T KNOW. EVERY VITAL FUNCTION SHOWS SIGNS OF DETERIORATION. HE SHOULD BE IN A HOSPITAL, NOT A MAX SUIT...
09
FINE. WE'LL PUT IN FOR A REPLACEMENT WHEN WE HIT BASE.
FOR PITY'S SAKE! THIS MISSION IS SUICIDAL ENOUGH AS IT IS! IF MAX DOESN'T FIRE, YOU'RE CONDEMNING THE REST OF THEM TO DEATH!
YOU'RE EXAGGERATING. HE'LL MAKE IT.
AND I'M TELLING YOU WE CAN'T TRUST HIM!
THIS IS MADNESS! WHAT'S SO IMPORTANT ABOUT TERMINAL 949 THE COMPANY'S PREPARED TO RISK ALL OUR LIVES FOR?
WHY CAN'T WE WAIT FOR BACK-UP? WHAT IS IT THEY DON'T WANT ANYONE TO KNOW ABOUT?
I...I CAN'T TELL YOU THAT.
BELIEVE ME, I DON'T LIKE THIS ANY MORE THAN YOU DO. I'VE NO CHOICE IN THE MATTER. WE HAVE A JOB TO DO--LET'S GET ON WITH IT.
GROUND LEADER! SECURITY CAMS SHOW A NUMBER OF HOSTILES MOVING YOUR WAY!


OKING
SPATTA
TELL ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW!
FUDDA FUDDA


IT'S PROBABLE THE HIVE IS LOCATED IN THE DOCKING BAYS!
TERMINAL SECURITY CAMS ZZTT INOPERATIVE FROM JUNCTION 9! REMEMBER ZZTT -OPPING YOUR REZZTYS!
POP! WE'RE LOSING YOU!
EAT ME

PICTURE'S CUTTING OUT!
GROUND LEADER, DO YOU RECEIVE ME?
ELLIS! WE HAVE LOST YOU ON VISUAL! RESPOND! REPEAT-- RESPOND!
IT'S GONE DEAD--!
THE WHOLE SYSTEM'S DOWN! SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO THE PRIMARY RELAY!
I HAVE TO GO ABOARD! RECALL THE SHUTTLE!
BE CAREFUL, LARA! REMAIN IN THE COMMAND CENTER AT ALL TIMES! I DON'T WANT TO LOSE YOU!
TEAM LEADER TO ALL UNITS! WE HAVE A COMMUNICATIONS BREAKDOWN. IF YOU ARE RECEIVING ME, MAINTAIN PRESENT POSITION! COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER IS COMING ABOARD!
SHUTTL


SPATTA
THWUPPA
THWUPPA
LINE TO NEMESIS IS DEAD! SOMETHING'S GONE WRONG!
FUDDA
FUDDA
ELLIS! THIS IS GROUND LEADER! DO YOU RECEIVE?
SPATTA
THWUPPA
THWUPPA
AFFIRMATIVE!
APPROACHING JUNCTION 4.
THANKS BE FOR THAT! WHERE ARE YOU?
JUNC
4
WE'VE LOST CONTACT WITH NEMESIS! SIT TIGHT, BOY! WE LOSE MAX, OUR BUTTS ARE GOOD AND TRULY ON THE SPIT!
14

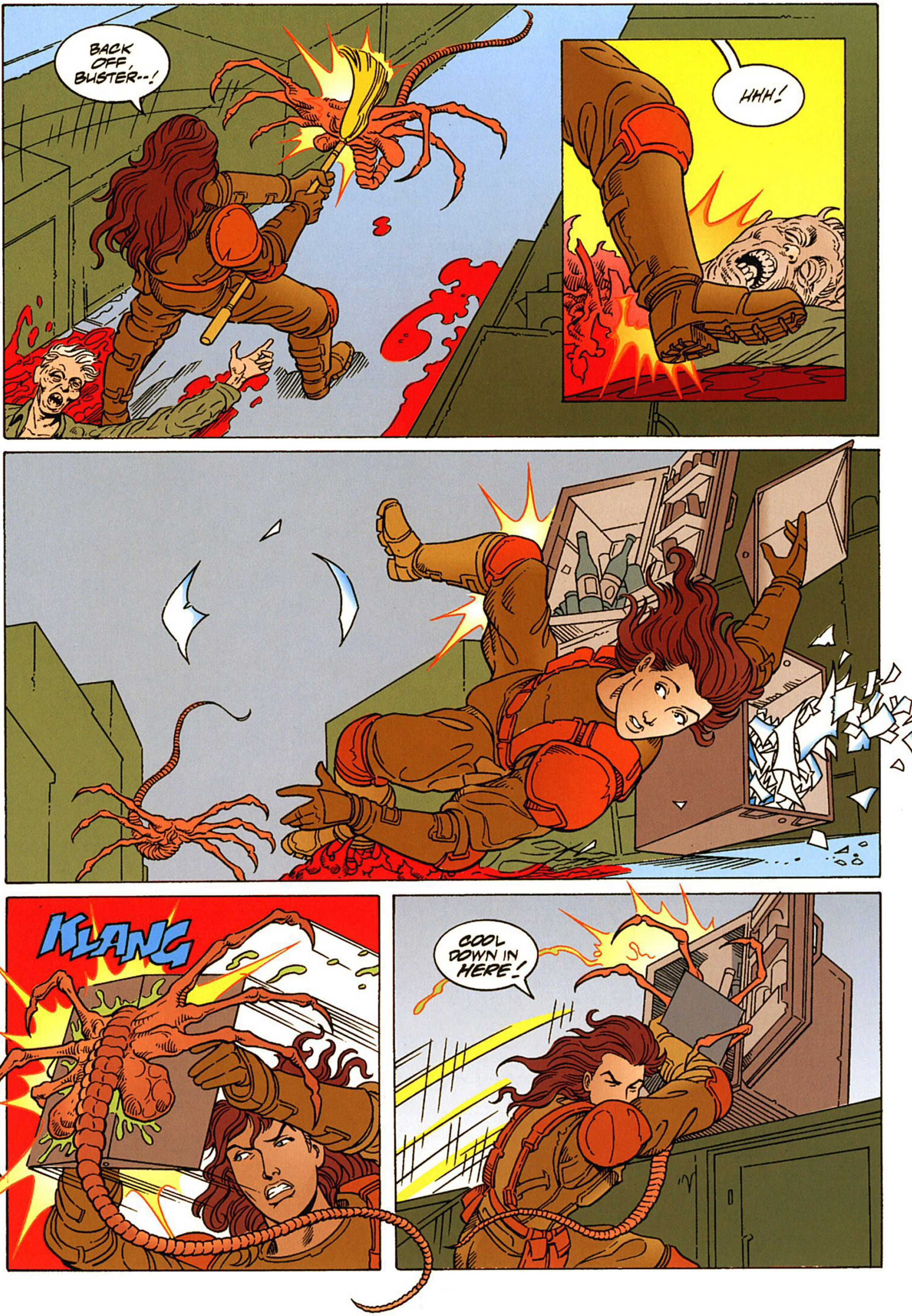

COMMUNICATIONS
MAIN FRAME
IT'S BEEN CUT!
SKKRRITTTT-T

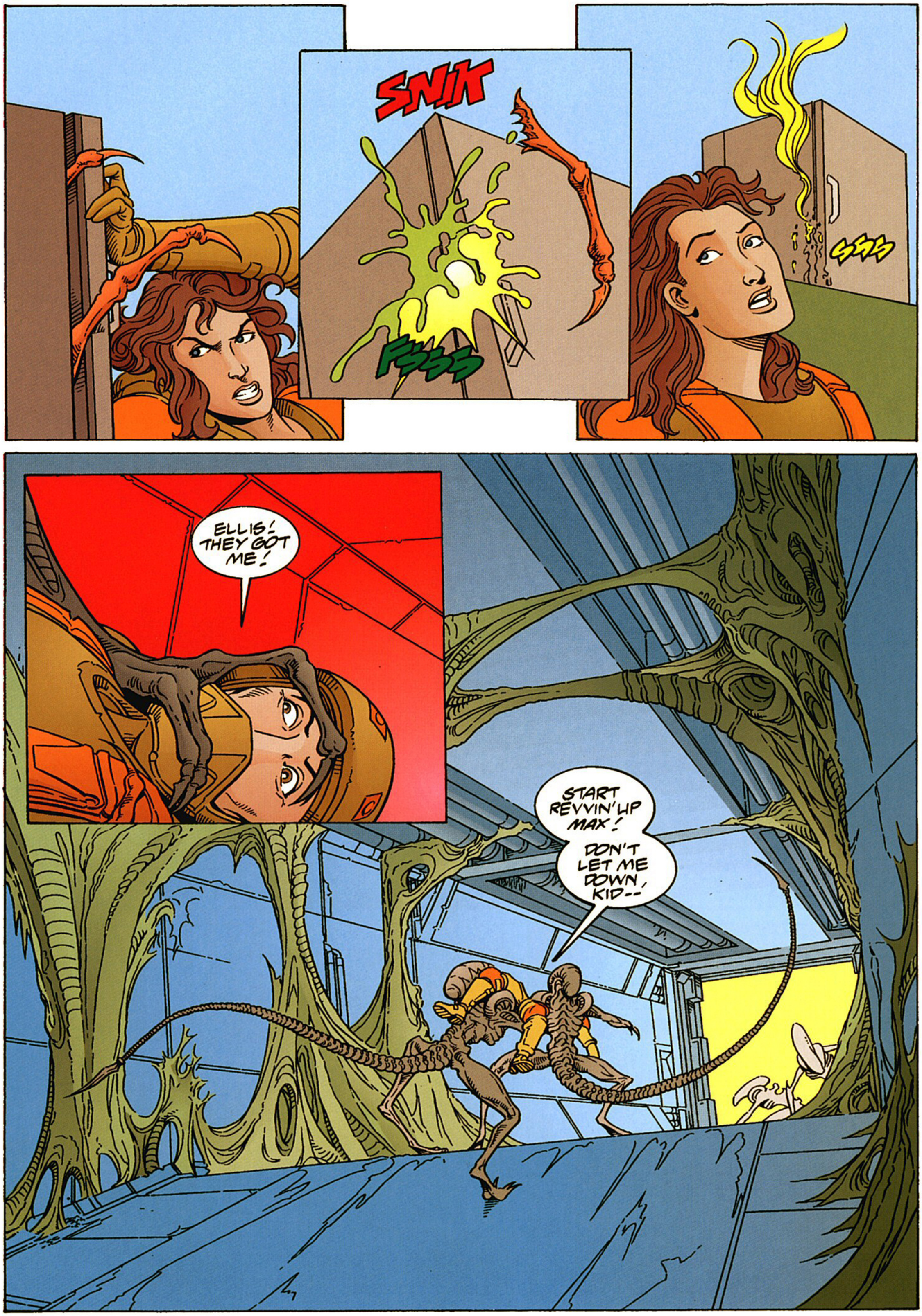
IT DON'T TAKE LONG FOR WORD ABOUT US TO GET 'ROUND!
FUDDA FUDDA
DON'T TELL ME IT'S GETTIN' TOO HOT EVEN FOR YOU, PULASKI!
THWUPPA SPATTA
UHHH!
HSSS
SPATTA
CANDY MAN!
FUDDA FUDDA

VZZTT
THERE, THAT OUGHT TO--
HUUH--?
OH, MY GOD--!
UHH!
NO--!

THIS IS A FOUL-UP, GRIGSON! LET ME PULL THEM OUT OF THERE AND NUKE IT!
I CAN'T ALLOW THAT.
I'VE ALREADY EXPLAINED, IT'S ESSENTIAL WE RECOVER THE DATA. WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT WENT WRONG.
I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF WE CAN GET THROUGH! MY MAX IS AT DEATH'S DOOR-- HE COULD FOLD ON US ANYTIME!
YOU BETTER HOPE HE DOESN'T, IZZARD.
REMEMBER, IN THE END WE'RE ALL EXPENDABLE.
VZAKK

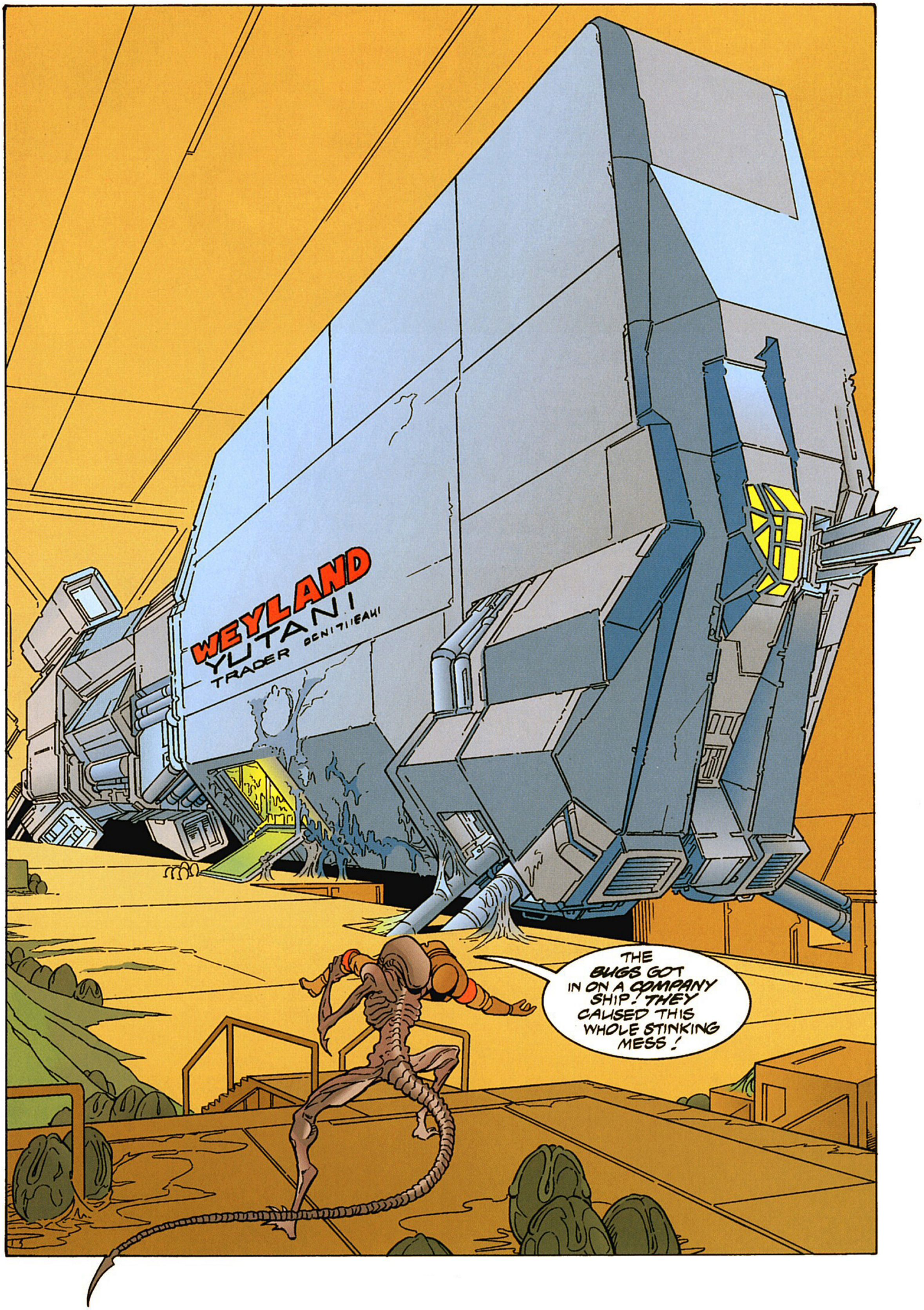
THEY... THEY GOT ME! STINKIN' BUGS-- NEVER... NEVER FIGURED--
YOU'RE GONNA BE OKAY, CANDY MAN! WE'RE GONNA GET YOU OUTTA HERE!
BDOW
BDOW
BDOW
SPATTA
IT'S NO GOOD, TEAPE! TOO DAMN MANY OF 'EM!
TEAPE!

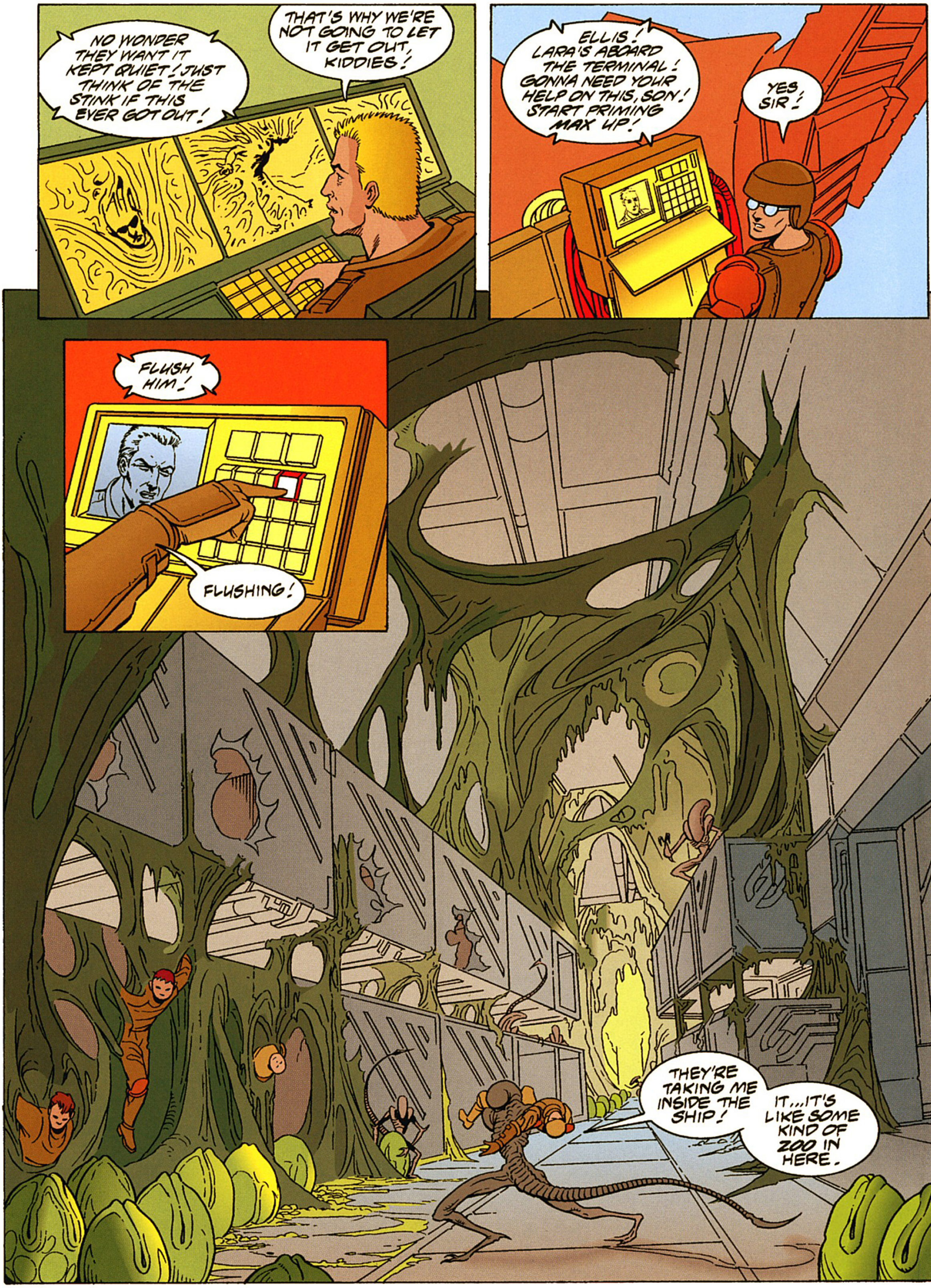

BACK OFF, BUSTER--!
HHH!
KLANG
COOL DOWN IN HERE!



SNIK
FSSS
SSS
ELLIS! THEY GOT ME!
START REVVIN' UP MAX!
DON'T LET ME DOWN, KID--!

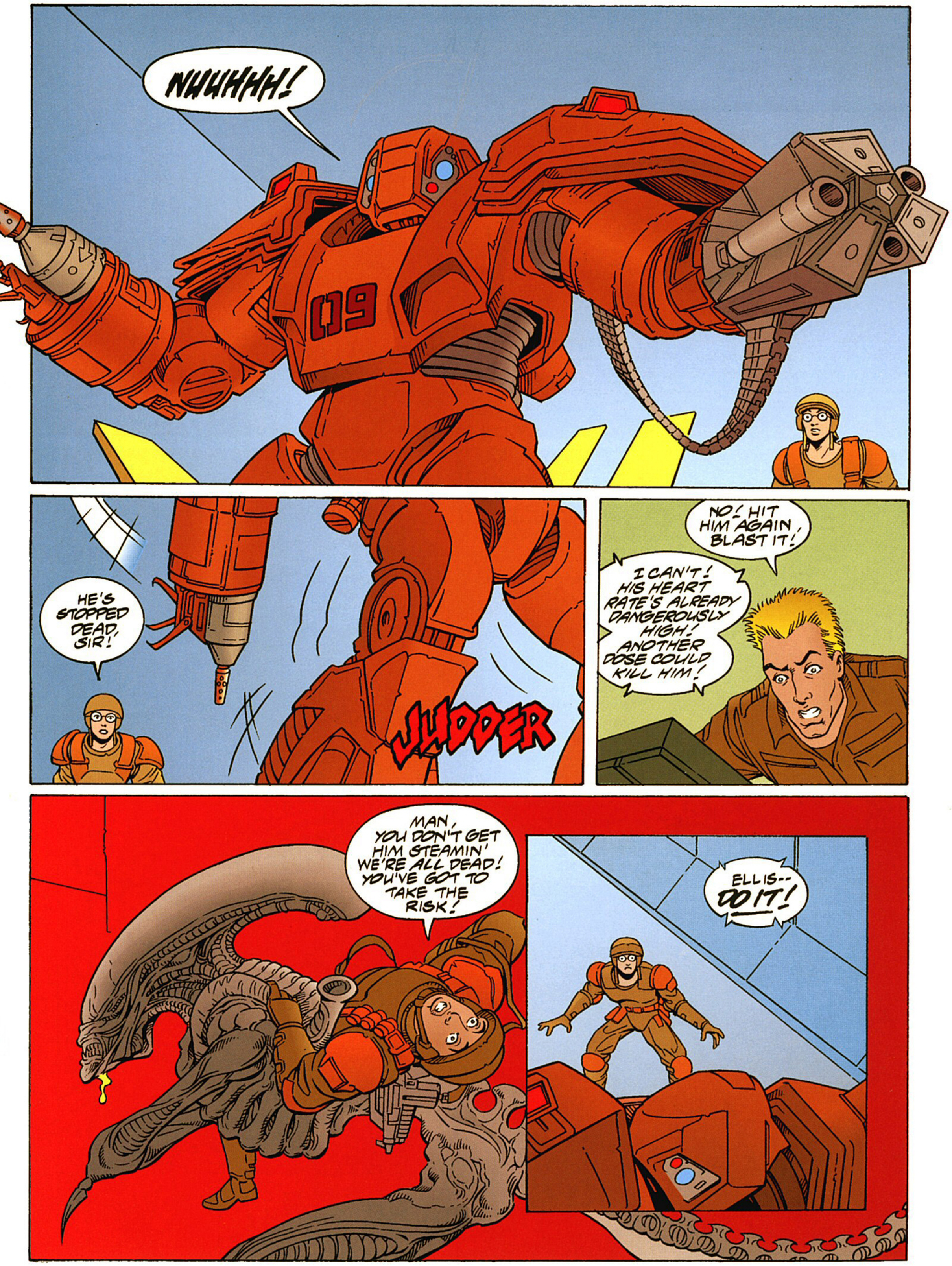
--I DON'T WANT TO DIE LIKE THIS!
RELAY NOW OPERATIVE! YOU'RE BACK ON LINE!
GOOD WORK, LARA!
GROUND LEADER, ARE YOU RECEIVING ME? REPORT!
PULASKI'S HURT BAD, POP! TEAPE'S GONE! THEY'RE TAKING HIM TO THE HIVE!
FUDDA
FUDDA
TEAPE! REPORT!
I HOPE YOU'RE ALL GETTING A GOOD LOOK AT THIS!
AIR
NOW YOU KNOW WHY WE'RE RISKING OUR NECKS!
WEYLAND YUTANI TRADER--!
WEY

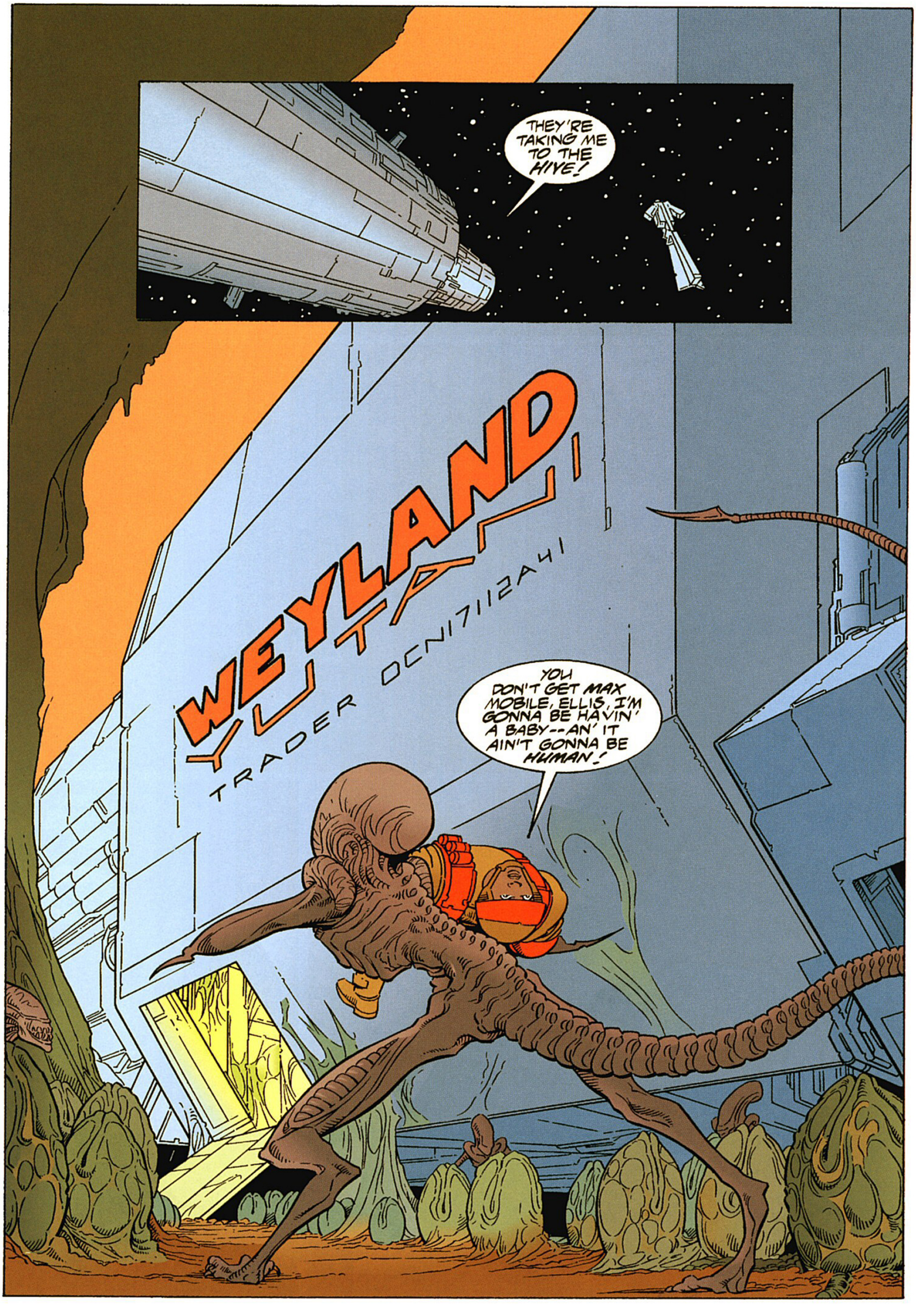

WEYLAND
YUTANI
TRADER
THE BUGS GOT IN ON A COMPANY SHIP! THEY CAUSED THIS WHOLE STINKING MESS!

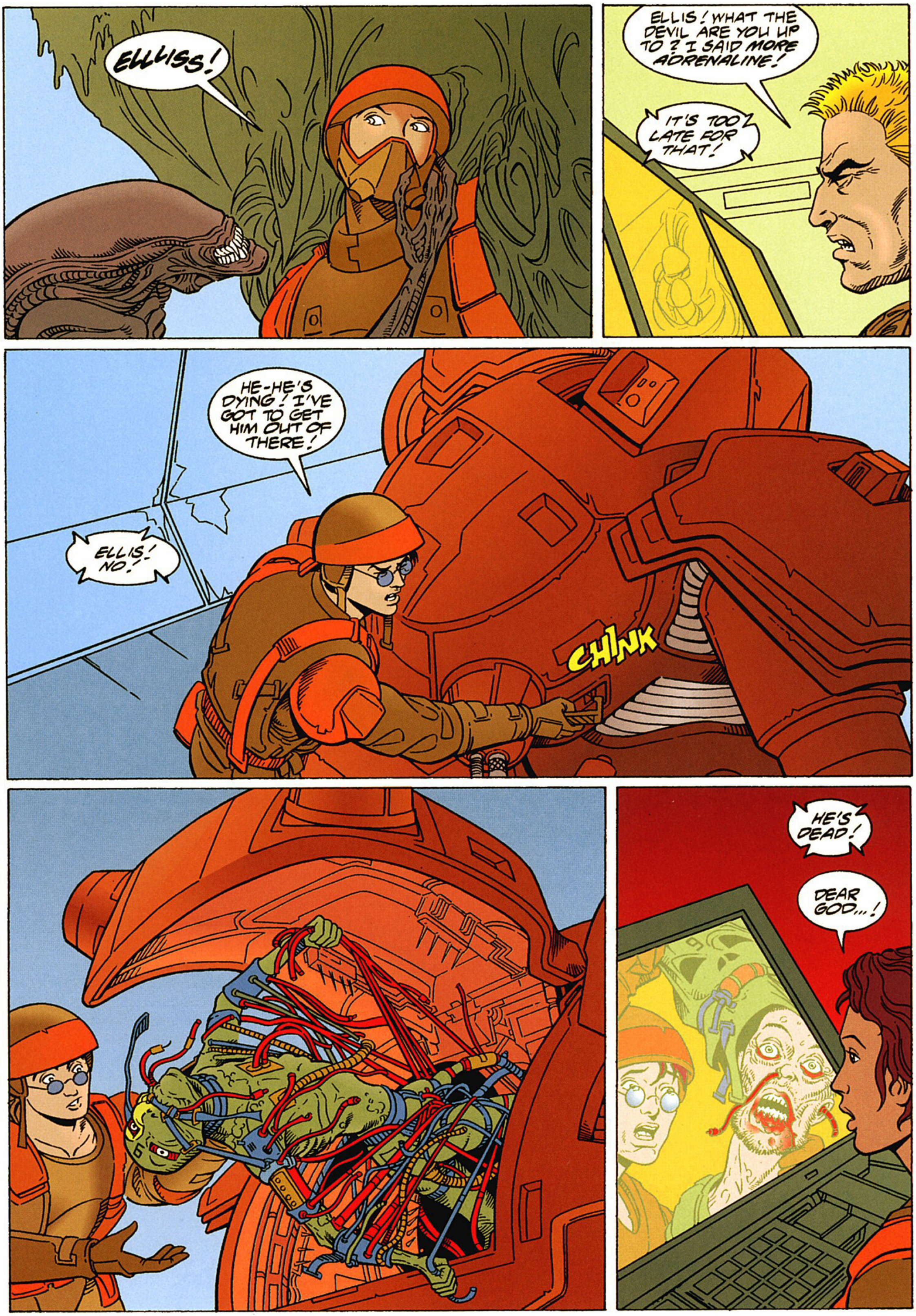

NO WONDER THEY WANT IT KEPT QUIET! JUST THINK OF THE STINK IF THIS EVER GOT OUT!
THAT'S WHY WE'RE NOT GOING TO LET IT GET OUT, KIDDIES!
ELLIS! LARA'S ABOARD THE TERMINAL! GONNA NEED YOUR HELP ON THIS, SON! START PRIMING MAX UP!
YES, SIR!
FLUSH HIM!
FLUSHING!
THEY'RE TAKING ME INSIDE THE SHIP!
IT...IT'S LIKE SOME KIND OF ZOO IN HERE.

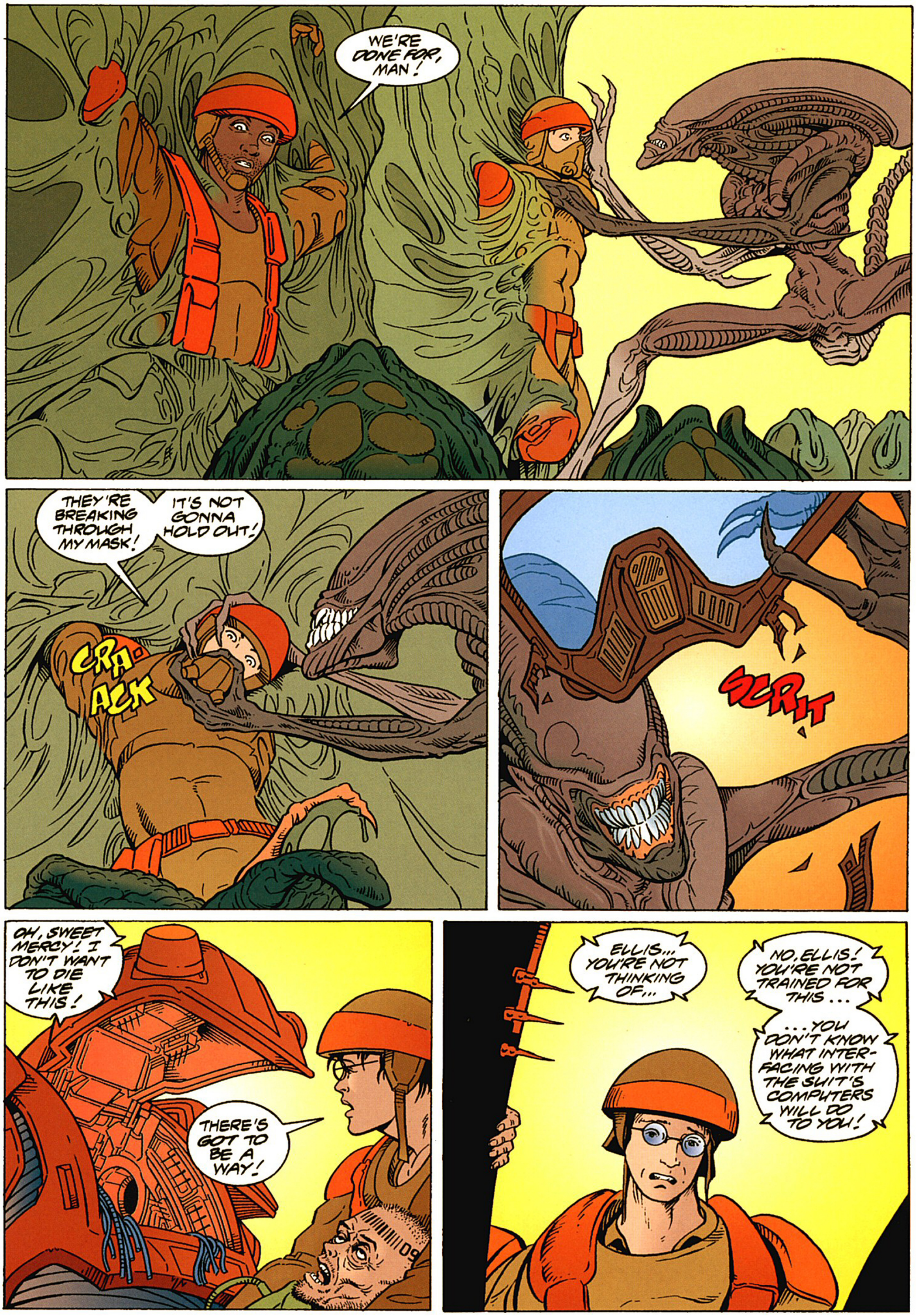
MADNESS! WHAT THE DEVIL WERE THEY UP TO?
I DON'T KNOW! YOU'LL HAVE TO ASK THE COMPANY!
OUR ORDERS ARE TO SALVAGE THE SHIP'S DATA LOG-- THEN DESTROY ALL EVIDENCE! THAT'S ALL!
ELLIS! ADRENALINE, LEVEL ONE!
LEVEL ONE...
...LEVEL TWO...
YOU HEAR THAT, CANDY MAN? YOU JUST CAN'T TRUST THE STINKIN' COMPANY!
CANDY MAN!

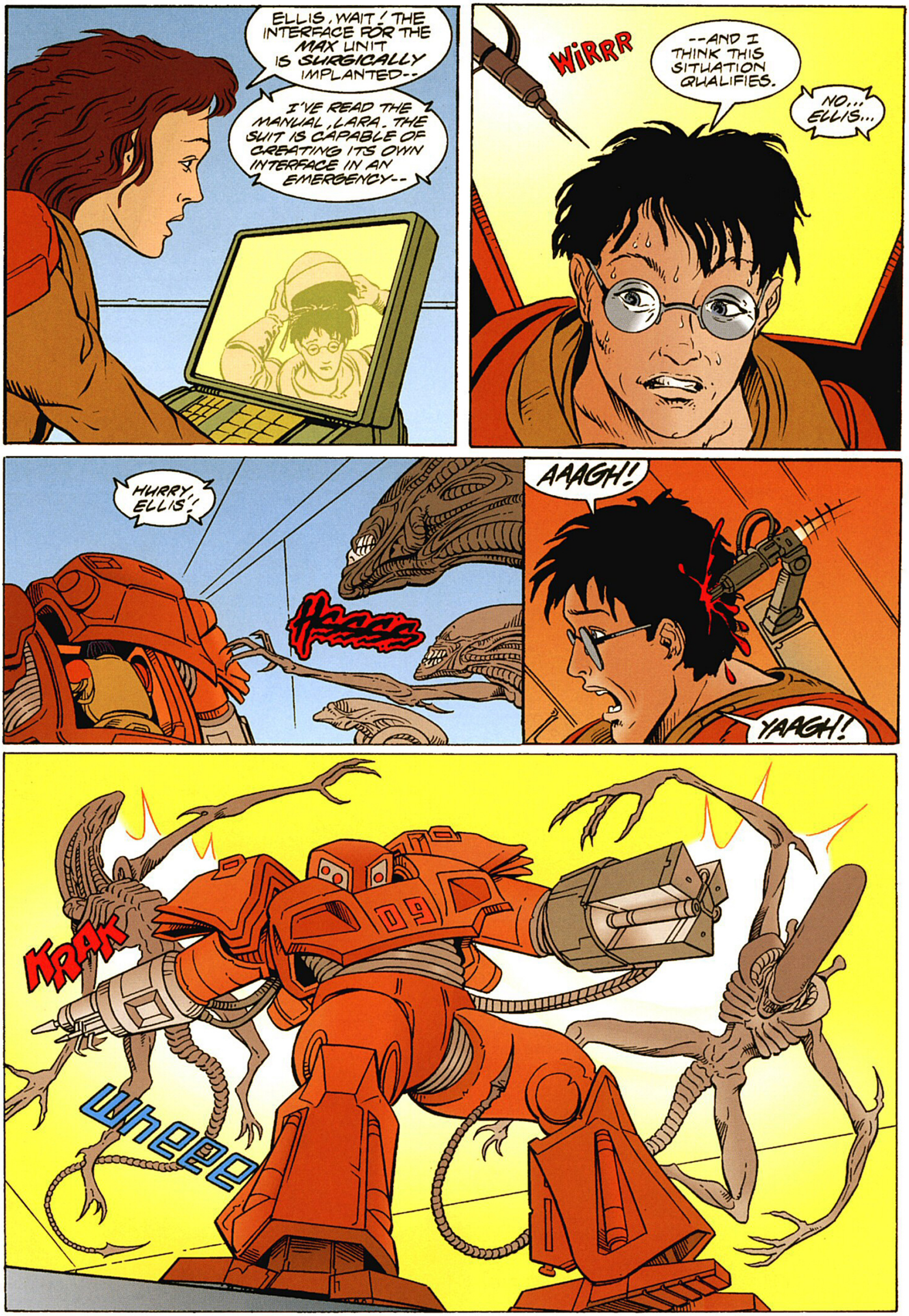
PULASKI'S DEAD! THEY KILLED THE CANDY MAN!
WATCH YOUR BACK, GROUND LEADER!
UHHH!
GOTTA GO LIMP, LET 'EM TAKE ME--!
THEY'RE TAKIN' ME TO THE HIVE, POP!
HIT HIM WITH THREE, ELLIS, AND STAND WELL BACK!
Y-YES, SIR!
LEVEL THREE!


NUUHHH!
HE'S STOPPED DEAD, SIR!
JUDDER
NO! HIT HIM AGAIN, BLAST IT!
I CAN'T! HIS HEART RATE'S ALREADY DANGEROUSLY HIGH! ANOTHER DOSE COULD KILL HIM!
MAN, YOU DON'T GET HIM STEAMIN' WE'RE ALL DEAD! YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE THE RISK!
ELLIS-- DO IT!


THEY'RE TAKING ME TO THE *HIVE!*
WEYLAND YUTANI
TRADER OCN17112A41
YOU DON'T GET *MAX* MOBILE, ELLIS. I'M GONNA BE HAVIN' A BABY--AN' IT AIN'T GONNA BE *HUMAN!*


ELLISS!
ELLIS! WHAT THE DEVIL ARE YOU UP TO? I SAID MORE ADRENALINE!
IT'S TOO LATE FOR THAT!
HE-HE'S DYING! I'VE GOT TO GET HIM OUT OF THERE!
ELLIS! NO!
CHINK
HE'S DEAD!
DEAR GOD...!

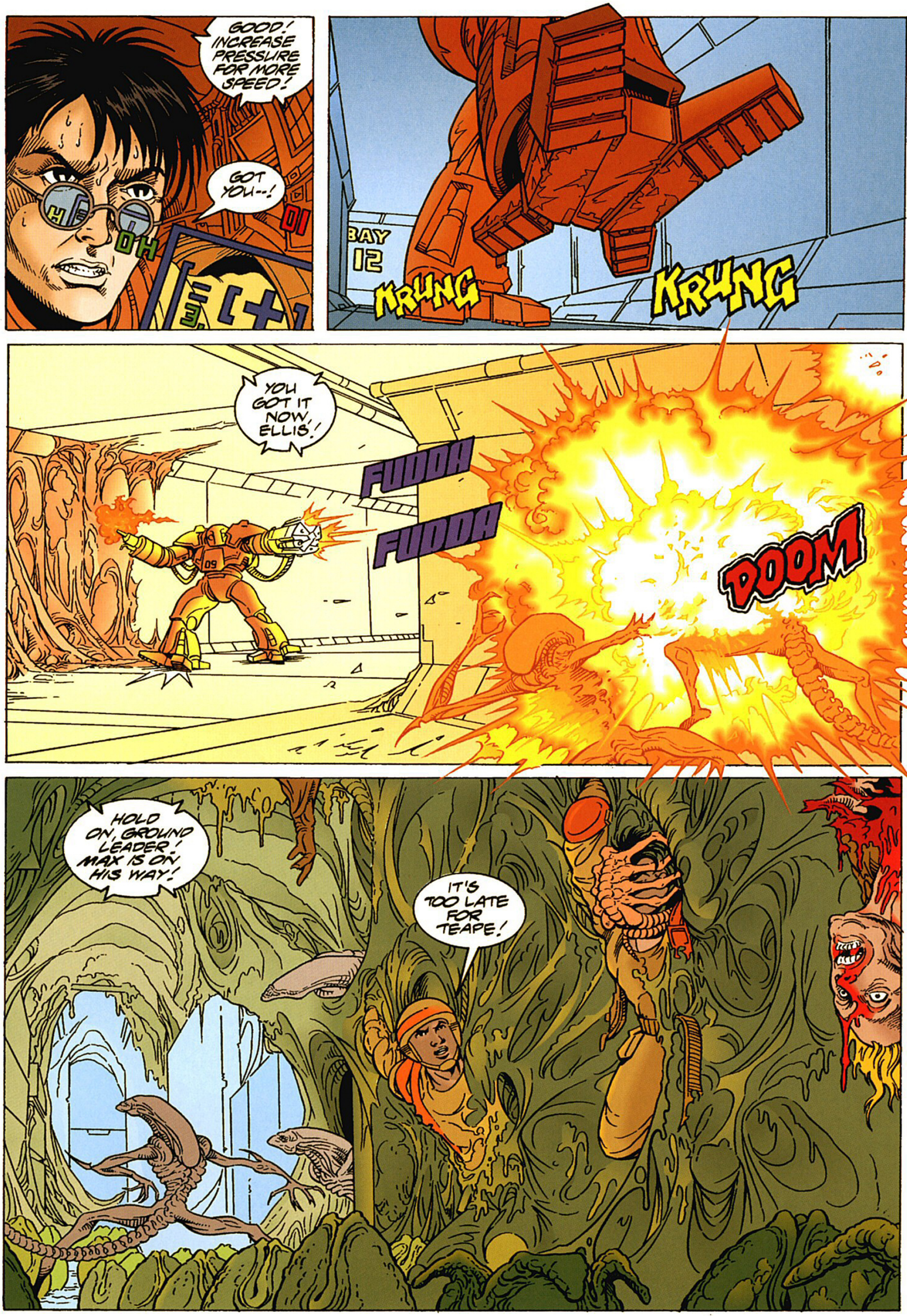

WE'RE DONE FOR, MAN!
THEY'RE BREAKING THROUGH MY MASK!
IT'S NOT GONNA HOLD OUT!
CRA-ACK
SCRIT
OH, SWEET MERCY! I DON'T WANT TO DIE LIKE THIS!
THERE'S GOT TO BE A WAY!
ELLIS... YOU'RE NOT THINKING OF...
NO, ELLIS! YOU'RE NOT TRAINED FOR THIS...
...YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT INTER-FACING WITH THE SUIT'S COMPUTERS WILL DO TO YOU!

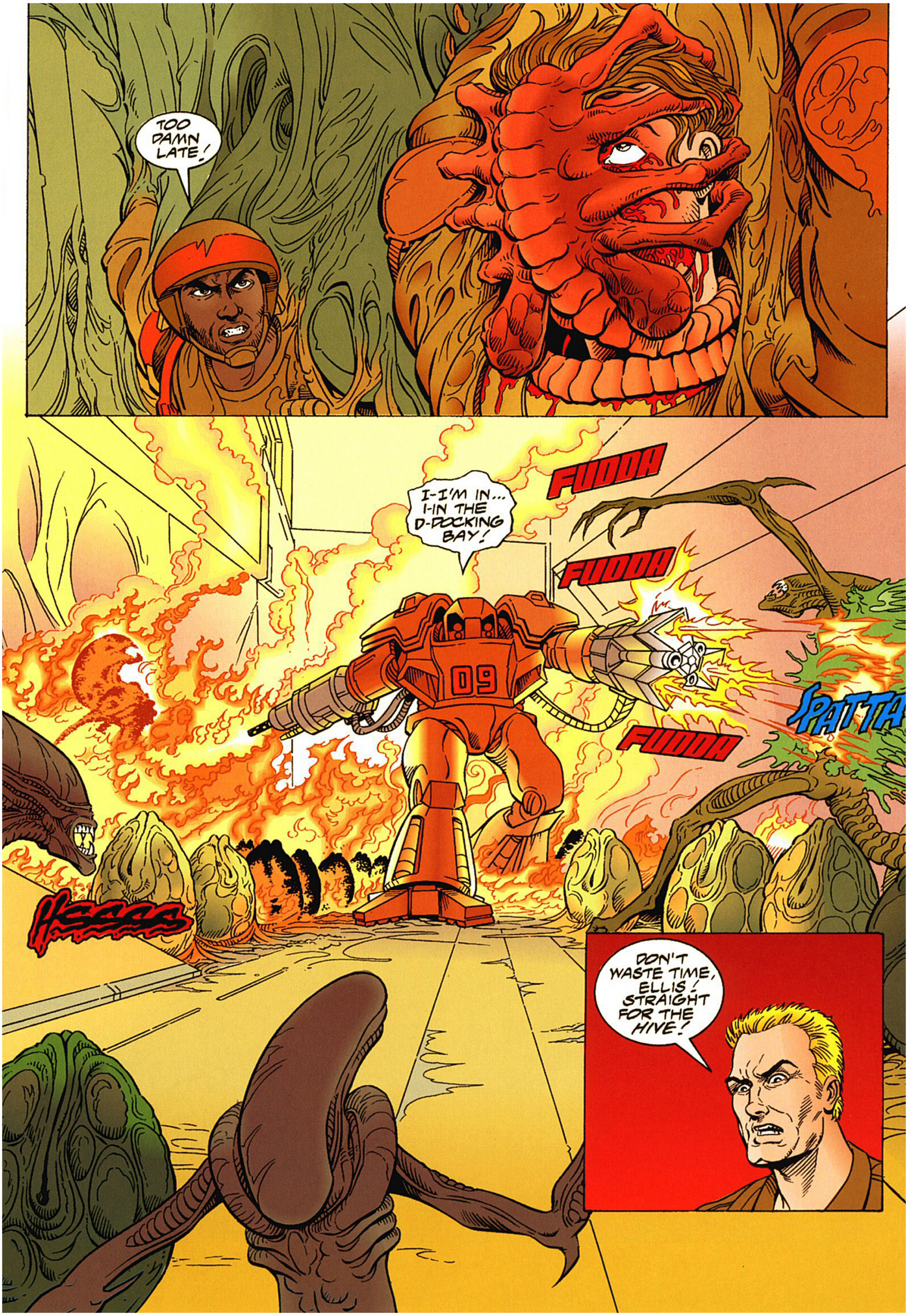


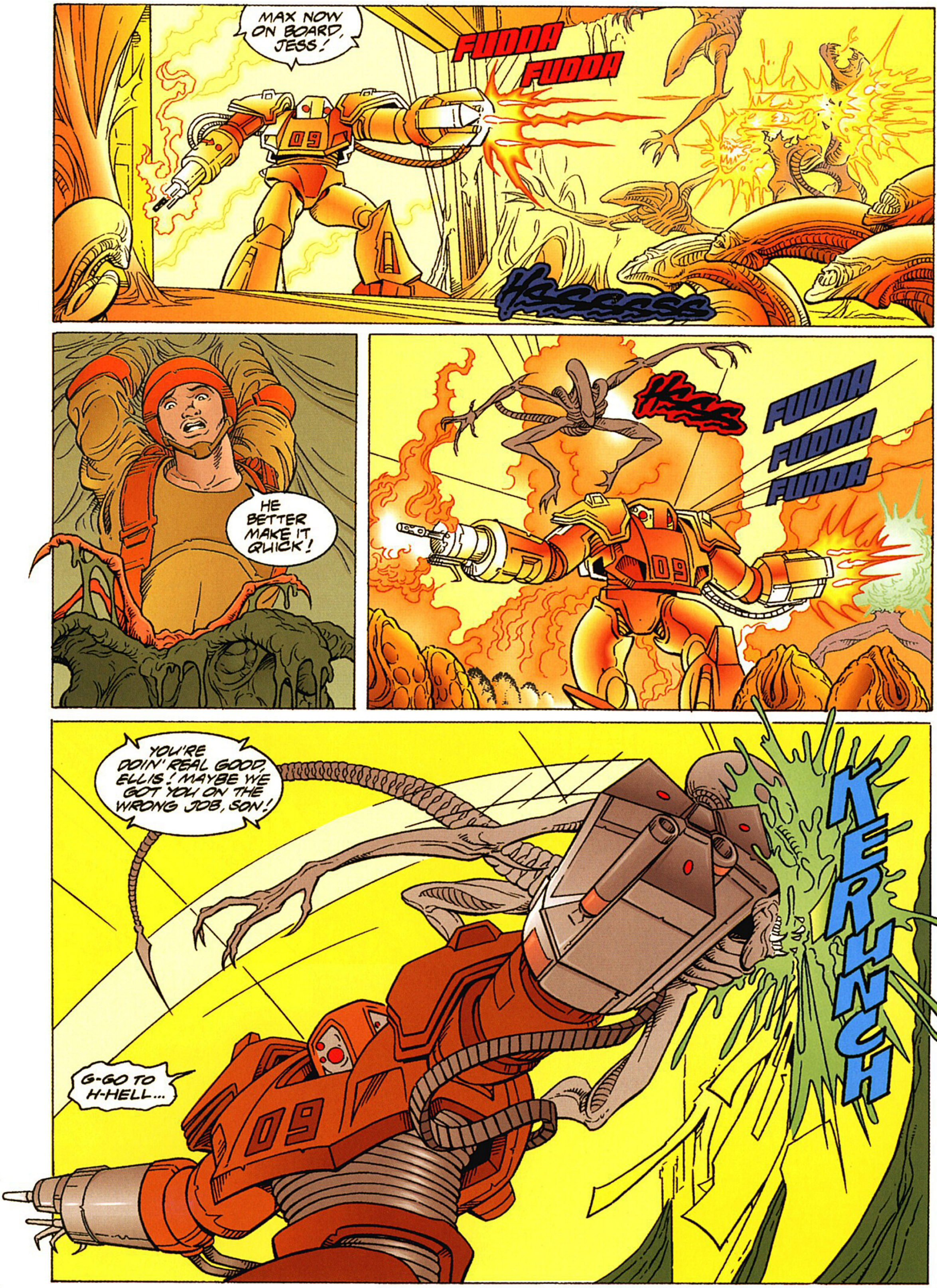
ELLIS, WAIT! THE INTERFACE FOR THE MAX UNIT IS SURGICALLY IMPLANTED--
I'VE READ THE MANUAL, LARA. THE SUIT IS CAPABLE OF CREATING ITS OWN INTERFACE IN AN EMERGENCY--
WIRRR
--AND I THINK THIS SITUATION QUALIFIES.
NO... ELLIS...
HURRY, ELLIS!
AAAGH!
YAAGH!
KRAK
WHEEE

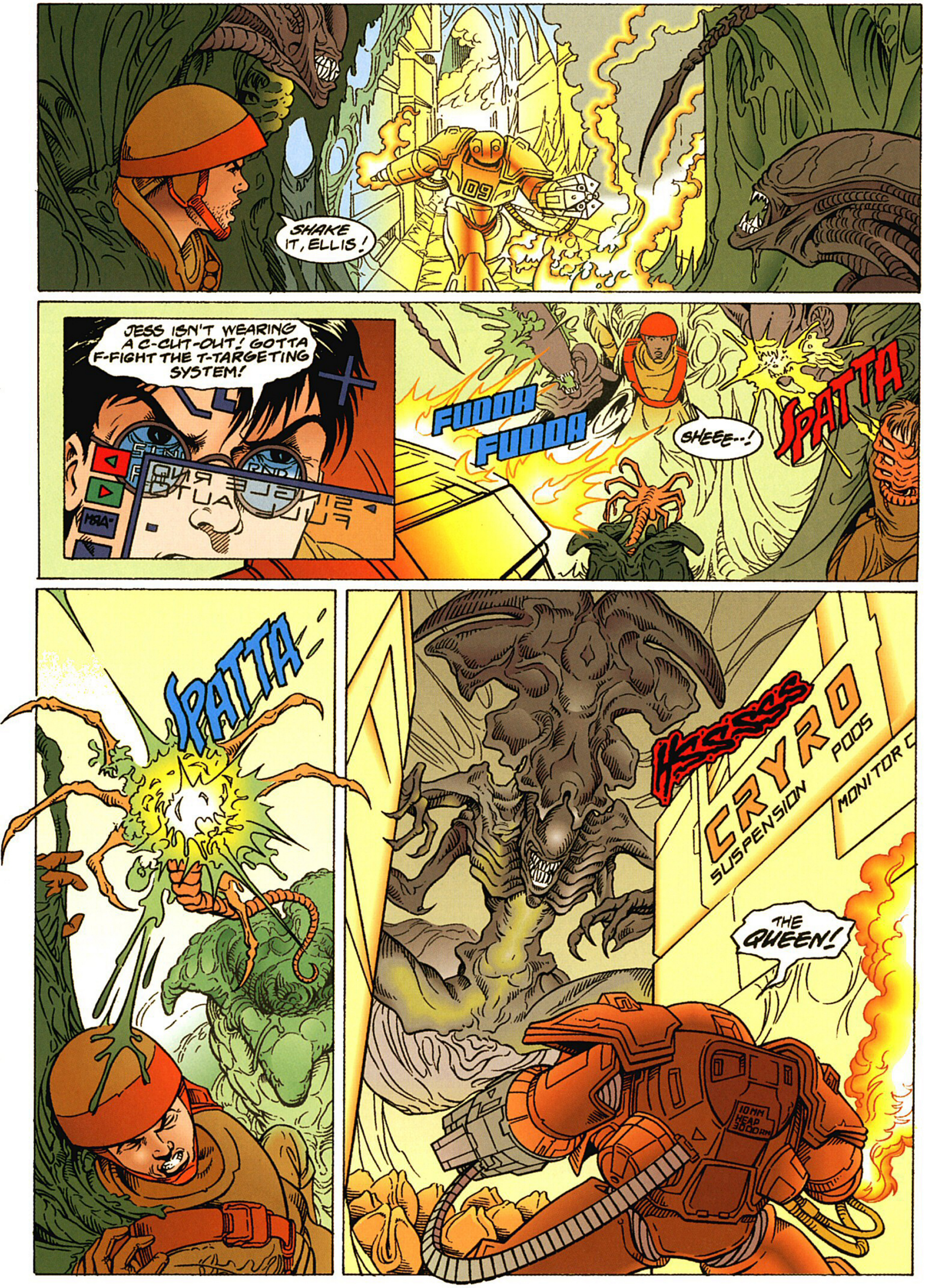
UGH! KILLING ME!
FOOM
FUDDA
FUDDA
VADOOM
YOU HAVE TO RELAX! STOP FIGHTING THE SUIT FOR CONTROL!
WHIR
SPATTA
FUDDA
FUDDA
FUDDA

...RELAX...
70
LO
FUDDA
FUDDA
FUDDA
SPATTA
TRY FORWARD MOTION! EASY, WALK--DON'T TRY TO RUN.


GOOD! INCREASE PRESSURE FOR MORE SPEED!
GOT YOU--!
BAY 12
KRUNG
KRUNG
YOU GOT IT NOW, ELLIS!
FUDDA
FUDDA
DOOM
HOLD ON, GROUND LEADER! MAX IS ON HIS WAY!
IT'S TOO LATE FOR TEAPE!


TOO DAMN LATE!
I-I'M IN... I-IN THE D-DOCKING BAY!
FUDDA
FUDDA
FUDDA
SPATTA
DON'T WASTE TIME, ELLIS! STRAIGHT FOR THE HIVE!

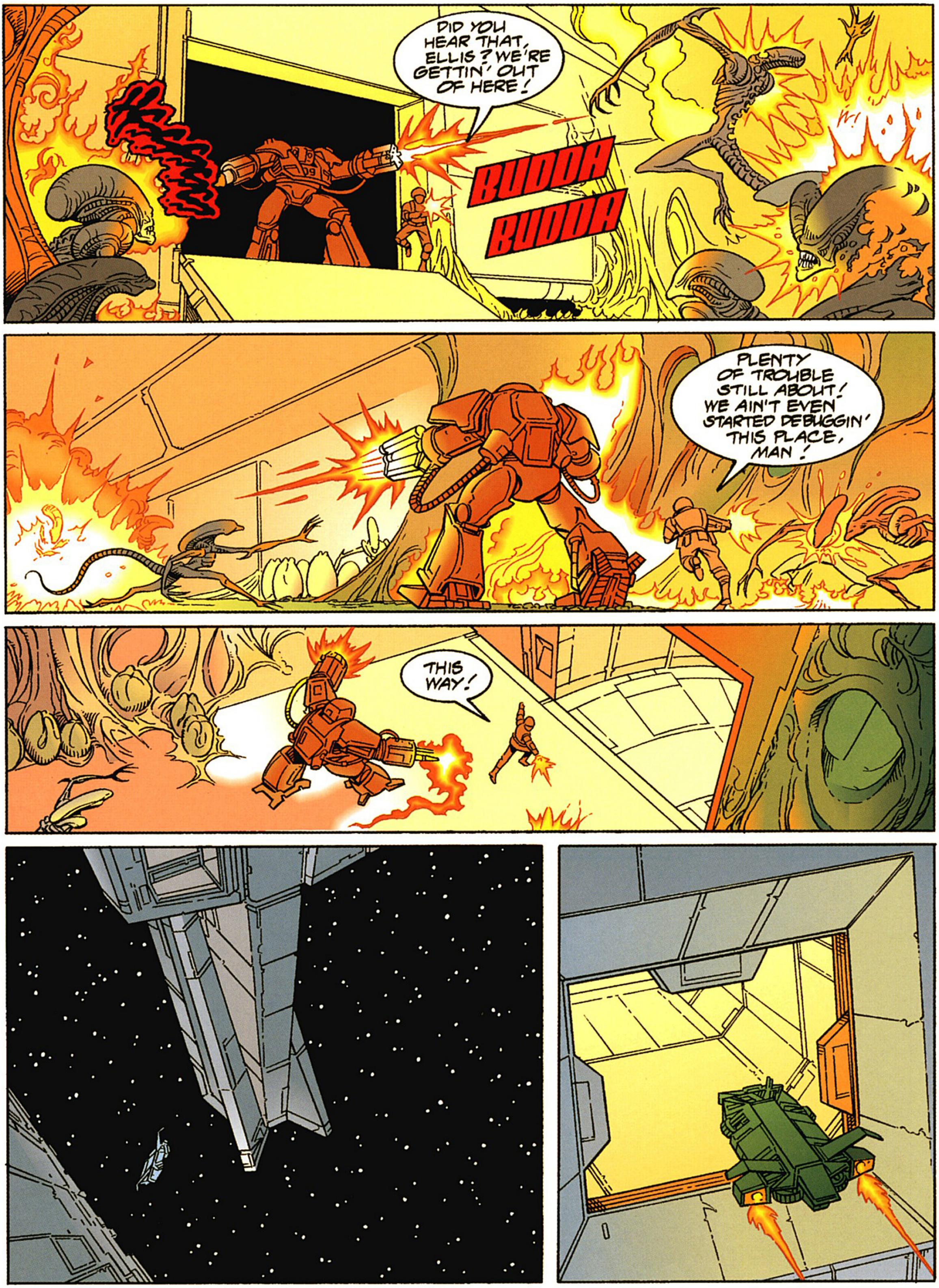

MAX NOW ON BOARD, JESS!
FUDDA FUDDA
HSSSSSS
HE BETTER MAKE IT QUICK!
HSSS
FUDDA FUDDA FUDDA
YOU'RE DOIN' REAL GOOD, ELLIS! MAYBE WE GOT YOU ON THE WRONG JOB, SON!
KERUNCH
G-GO TO H-HELL...

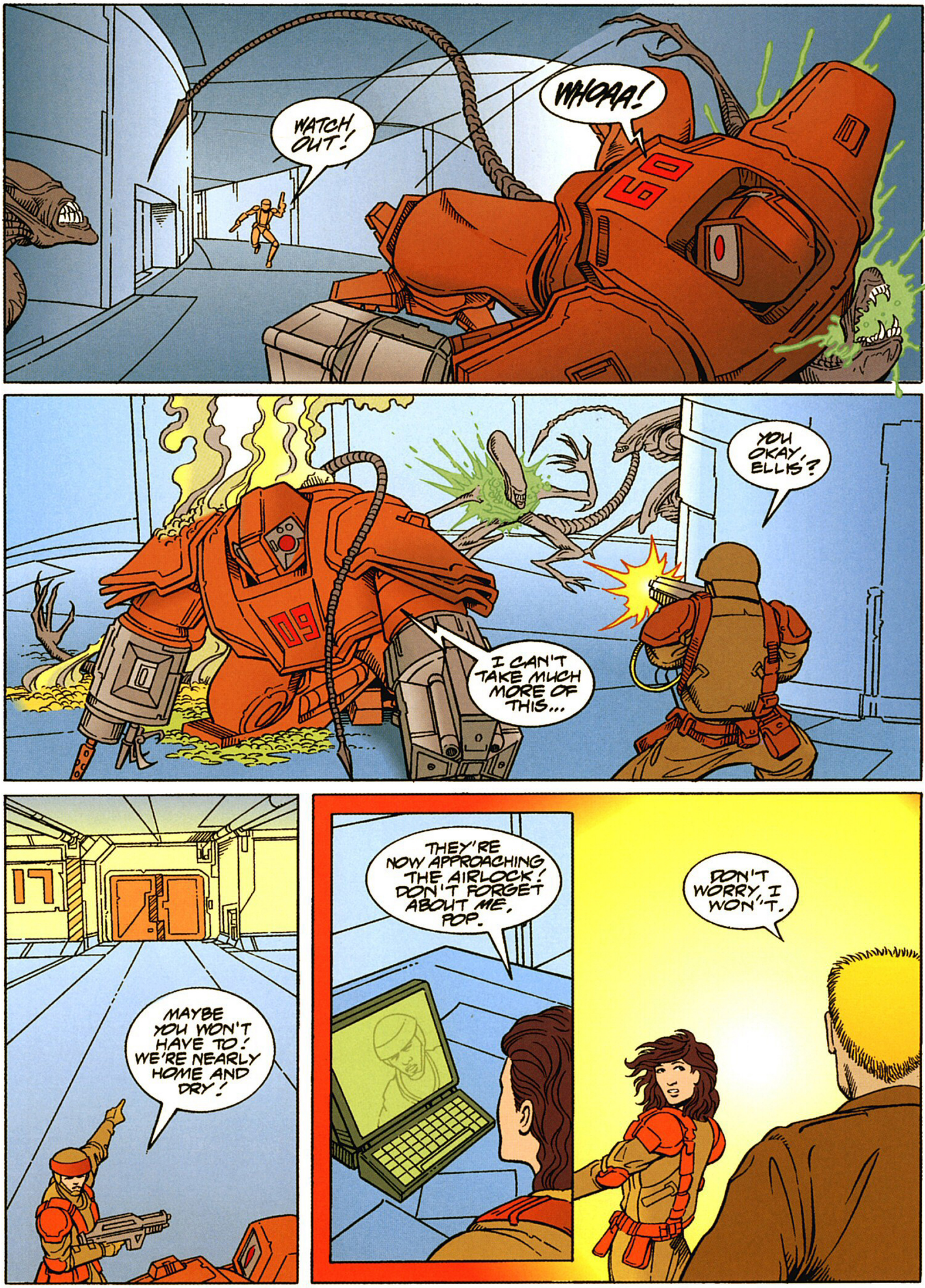

SHAKE IT, ELLIS!
JESS ISN'T WEARING A C-CUT-OUT! GOTTA F-FIGHT THE T-TARGETING SYSTEM!
FUDDA FUDDA
SHEEE--!
SPATTA
SPATTA
HSSSSS
CRYRO SUSPENSION PODS
MONITOR C
THE QUEEN!

THWUPPA
THWUPPA
THWUPPA
VADOOM!
VADOOM!
CUT ME LOOSE, MAN!
I- I'LL TRY...
FZZZZ
CAREFUL, ELLIS!

TEAPE--!
ACID SPLASH!
POOR SUCKER. HE WAS RIGHT-- SAFER IN JAIL!
TWO DEAD! TWO GOOD MEN, POP! DAMN YOU! DAMN THE COMPANY!
PLENTY OF TIME TO CUSS OUT WHOEVER YOU LIKE WHEN YOU'VE FINISHED YOUR JOB, JESS! LOCATE THE PRIMARY CONSOLE -- BEGIN TRANSFER OF THE SHIP'S DATALOG TO NEMESIS!

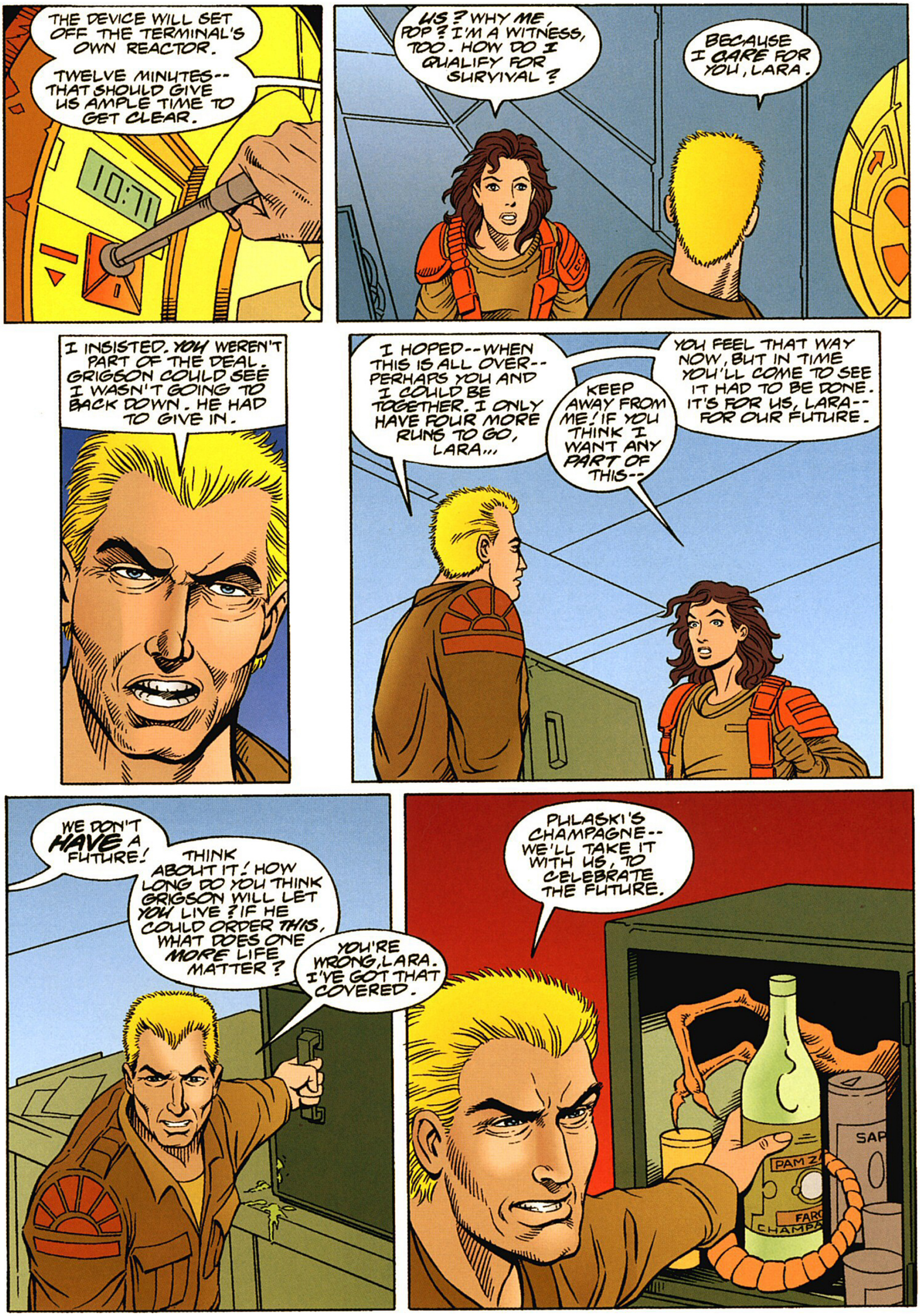
DATALOG PRIMED FOR TRANSMISSION. ARE YOU RECEIVING, NEMESIS?
AFFIRMATIVE. PROCEED.
COMING THROUGH LOUD AND PROUD, GROUND LEADER!
THE REST IS AUTOMATIC, POP! YOU DON'T NEED THEM! GET THEM OUT OF THERE!
OF COURSE.
WELL DONE, GENTLEMEN. REST ASSURED, I'LL CERTAINLY BE TAKING YOUR COMPLAINTS UP WITH THE COMPANY.
DATA COMPRESS
83 %
THERE'S AN AUXILIARY AIRLOCK ONE LEVEL BELOW YOUR DOCKING BAY. MUCH CLOSER. MAKE FOR THAT.
I'LL RENDEZVOUS WITH YOU IN THE SHUTTLE.
YO!


DID YOU HEAR THAT, ELLIS? WE'RE GETTIN' OUT OF HERE!
BUDDA BUDDA
PLENTY OF TROUBLE STILL ABOUT! WE AIN'T EVEN STARTED DEBUGGIN' THIS PLACE, MAN!
THIS WAY!


WATCH OUT!
WHOAA!
YOU OKAY, ELLIS?
I CAN'T TAKE MUCH MORE OF THIS...
MAYBE YOU WON'T HAVE TO! WE'RE NEARLY HOME AND DRY!
THEY'RE NOW APPROACHING THE AIRLOCK! DON'T FORGET ABOUT ME, POP.
DON'T WORRY, I WON'T.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE--
I CAME FOR YOU, LARA.
WH-WHAT DO YOU MEAN--? WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THAT FAIL-SAFE?
WHAT'S GOING ON? WHERE ARE YOU, POP?
HE'S HERE--WITH ME! HE'S GOT A FAIL-SAFE!
AH, JESS. I'M REALLY SORRY ABOUT THIS. YOU TOO, ELLIS.
SHAME TO END A PROMISING CAREER SO SOON. YOU DID REAL GOOD IN THAT BUG-SUIT, SON.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU UP TO, POP?
JESS, I WANT YOU TO KNOW THIS IS NONE OF MY DOING. IF THERE WAS ANY OTHER WAY...
I'VE GOT NO CHOICE, JESS. ORDERS. I CAN'T LEAVE ANY EVIDENCE BEHIND--NOTHING TO INCRIMINATE THE COMPANY.
THAT MEANS NO WITNESSES.
SHUNGG
SHUNGG

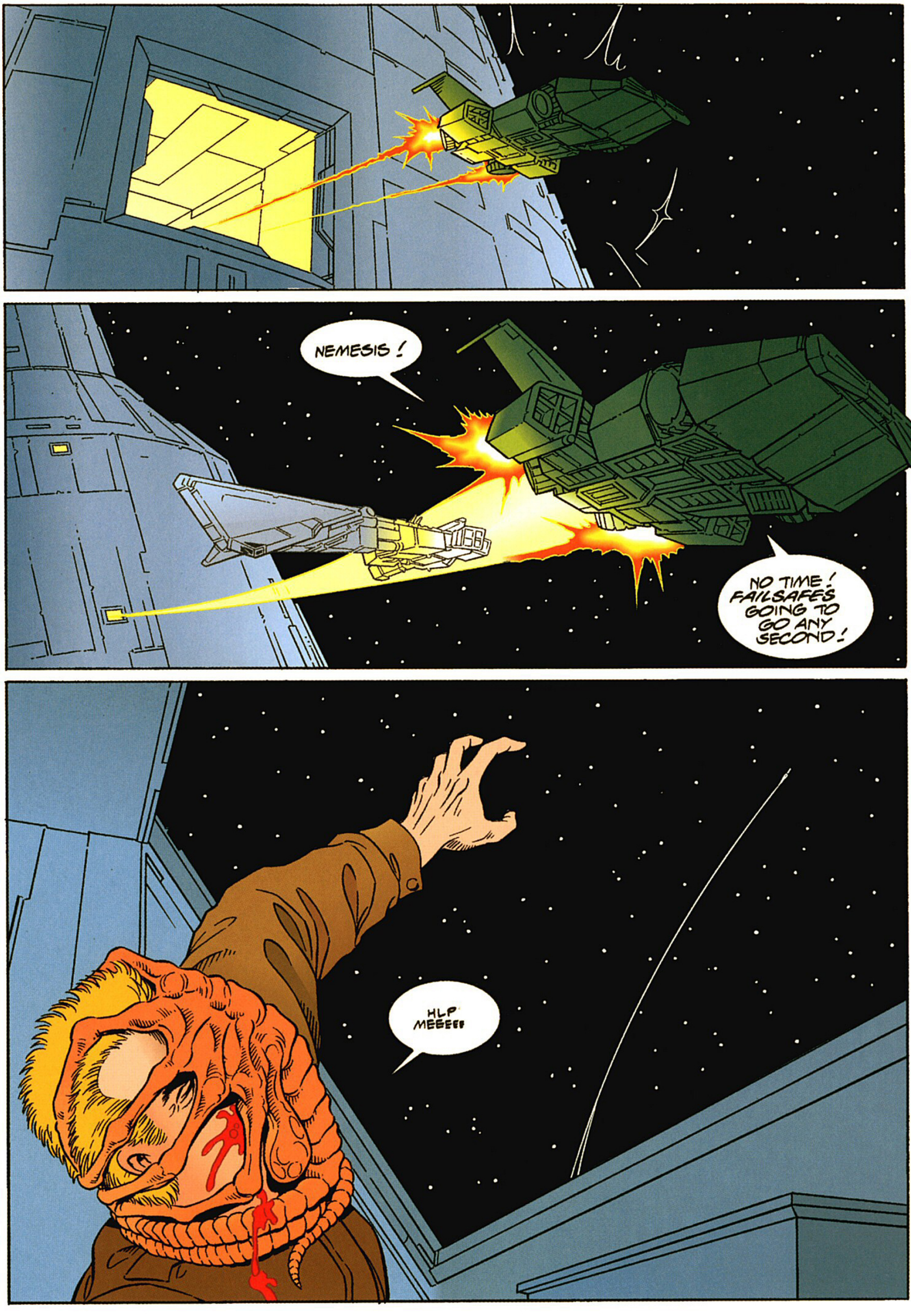
SO YOU'RE GOING TO MURDER THEM? NO!
DON'T TRY TO STOP ME! IT HAS TO BE DONE!
DON'T YOU SEE? IF THIS EVER CAME OUT IT WOULD DESTROY THE COMPANY--AND US WITH IT! EVERYTHING WE'VE EVER WORKED FOR!
EVERYTHING YOU'VE WORKED FOR!
MAX CREWS ARE EXPENDABLE. WE HAD TO GET THAT INFORMATION! BELIEVE ME, I DON'T LIKE THIS ANY MORE THAN YOU DO!
I'M SORRY, JESS. REAL SORRY. BUT YOU UNDERSTAND MY POSITION. I HAVE TO GO WITH THE COMPANY.
YOU LIKE IT A WHOLE LOT MORE THAN US, THAT'S FOR FREAKIN' SURE! DAMMIT, POP, DON'T DO THIS TO US!
KLIK
HE'S CUT US OFF!

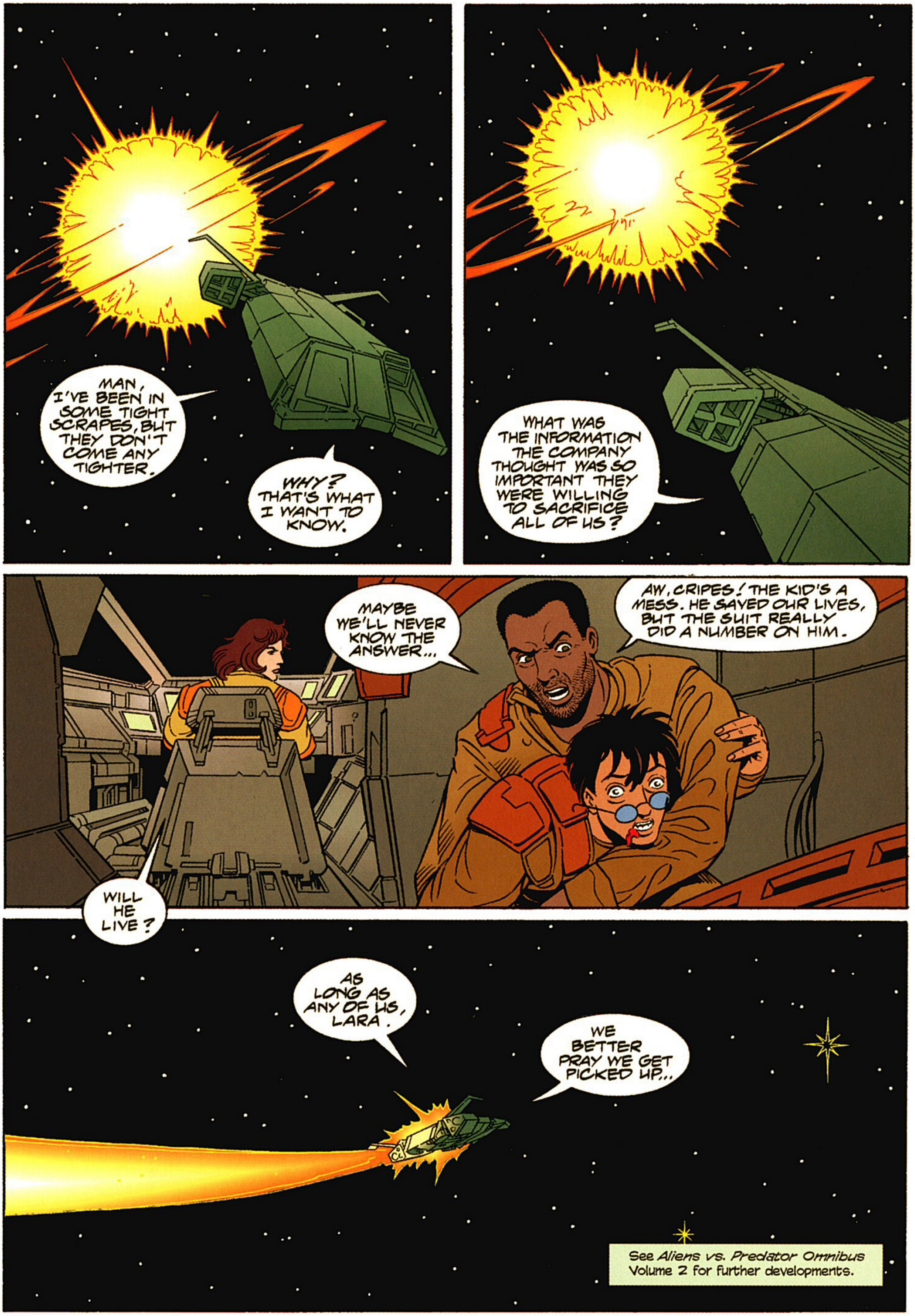

THE DEVICE WILL SET OFF THE TERMINAL'S OWN REACTOR.
TWELVE MINUTES--THAT SHOULD GIVE US AMPLE TIME TO GET CLEAR.
10:71
US? WHY ME, POP? I'M A WITNESS, TOO. HOW DO I QUALIFY FOR SURVIVAL?
BECAUSE I CARE FOR YOU, LARA.
I INSISTED. YOU WEREN'T PART OF THE DEAL. GRIGSON COULD SEE I WASN'T GOING TO BACK DOWN. HE HAD TO GIVE IN.
I HOPED--WHEN THIS IS ALL OVER--PERHAPS YOU AND I COULD BE TOGETHER. I ONLY HAVE FOUR MORE RUNS TO GO, LARA...
KEEP AWAY FROM ME! IF YOU THINK I WANT ANY PART OF THIS--
YOU FEEL THAT WAY NOW, BUT IN TIME YOU'LL COME TO SEE IT HAD TO BE DONE. IT'S FOR US, LARA--FOR OUR FUTURE.
WE DON'T HAVE A FUTURE!
THINK ABOUT IT! HOW LONG DO YOU THINK GRIGSON WILL LET YOU LIVE? IF HE COULD ORDER THIS, WHAT DOES ONE MORE LIFE MATTER?
YOU'RE WRONG, LARA. I'VE GOT THAT COVERED.
PULASKI'S CHAMPAGNE--WE'LL TAKE IT WITH US, TO CELEBRATE THE FUTURE.

HUH--?
NOOO!

HELP ME!
JESS! THIS IS LARA! FACE-HUGGER GOT POP! I'M ON MY WAY!
LOOKS LIKE OUR LUCK'S CHANGED, ELLIS!
PLEASE--!
GLUUU
SO LONG, POP!

NOT BEFORE TIME!
WHIRR! KKKR
FUDDA FUDDA
BKOOM
WE'RE NOT SAFE YET! HURRY!


NEMESIS!
NO TIME! FAILSAFE'S GOING TO GO ANY SECOND!
HLP MEEEEE


MAN, I'VE BEEN IN SOME TIGHT SCRAPES, BUT THEY DON'T COME ANY TIGHTER.
WHY? THAT'S WHAT I WANT TO KNOW.
WHAT WAS THE INFORMATION THE COMPANY THOUGHT WAS SO IMPORTANT THEY WERE WILLING TO SACRIFICE ALL OF US?
MAYBE WE'LL NEVER KNOW THE ANSWER...
AW, CRIPES! THE KID'S A MESS. HE SAVED OUR LIVES, BUT THE SUIT REALLY DID A NUMBER ON HIM.
WILL HE LIVE?
AS LONG AS ANY OF US, LARA.
WE BETTER PRAY WE GET PICKED UP...
See *Aliens vs. Predator Omnibus* Volume 2 for further developments.

FRENZY

script
JOHN WAGNER

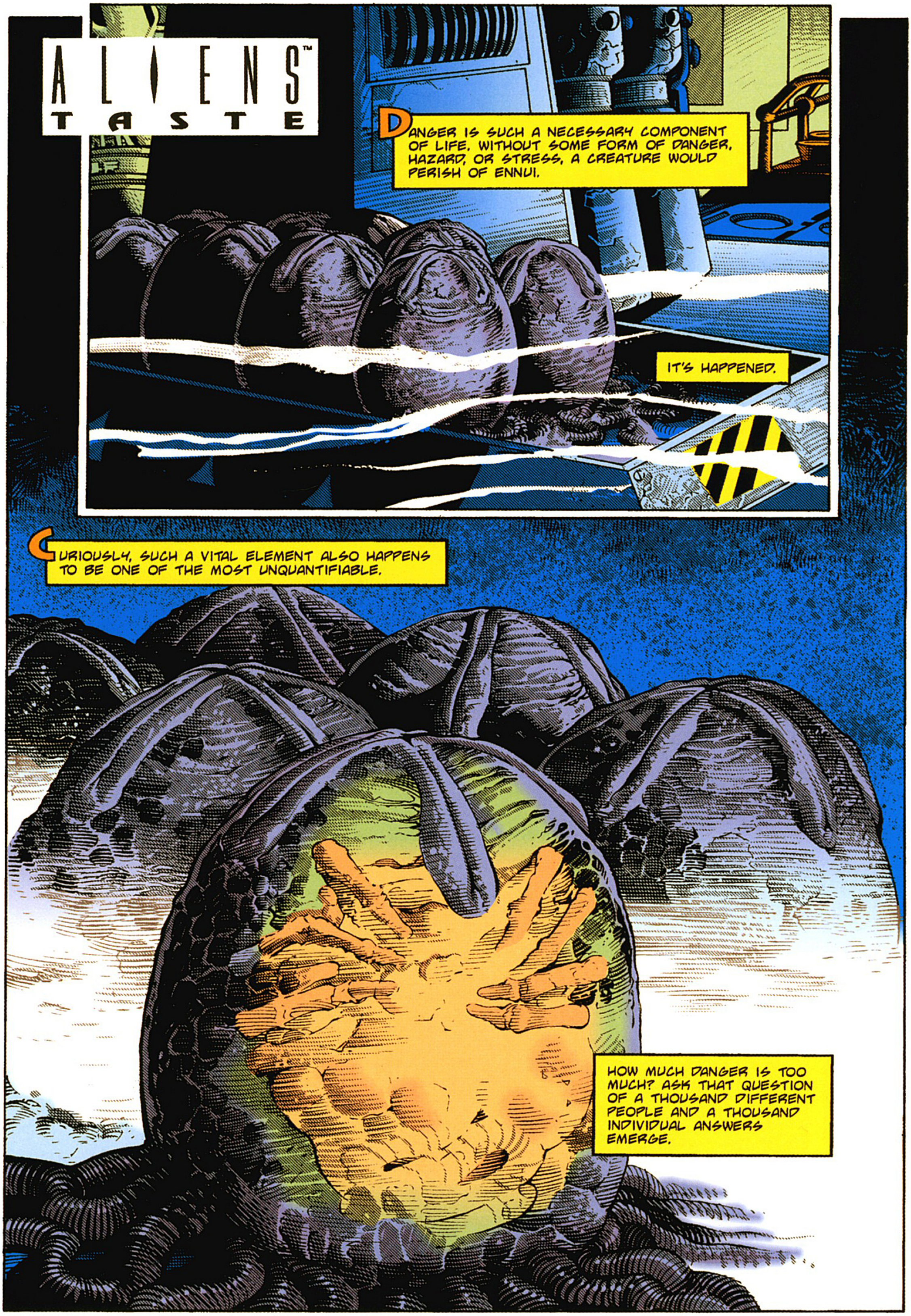
pencils
PAUL MENDOZA

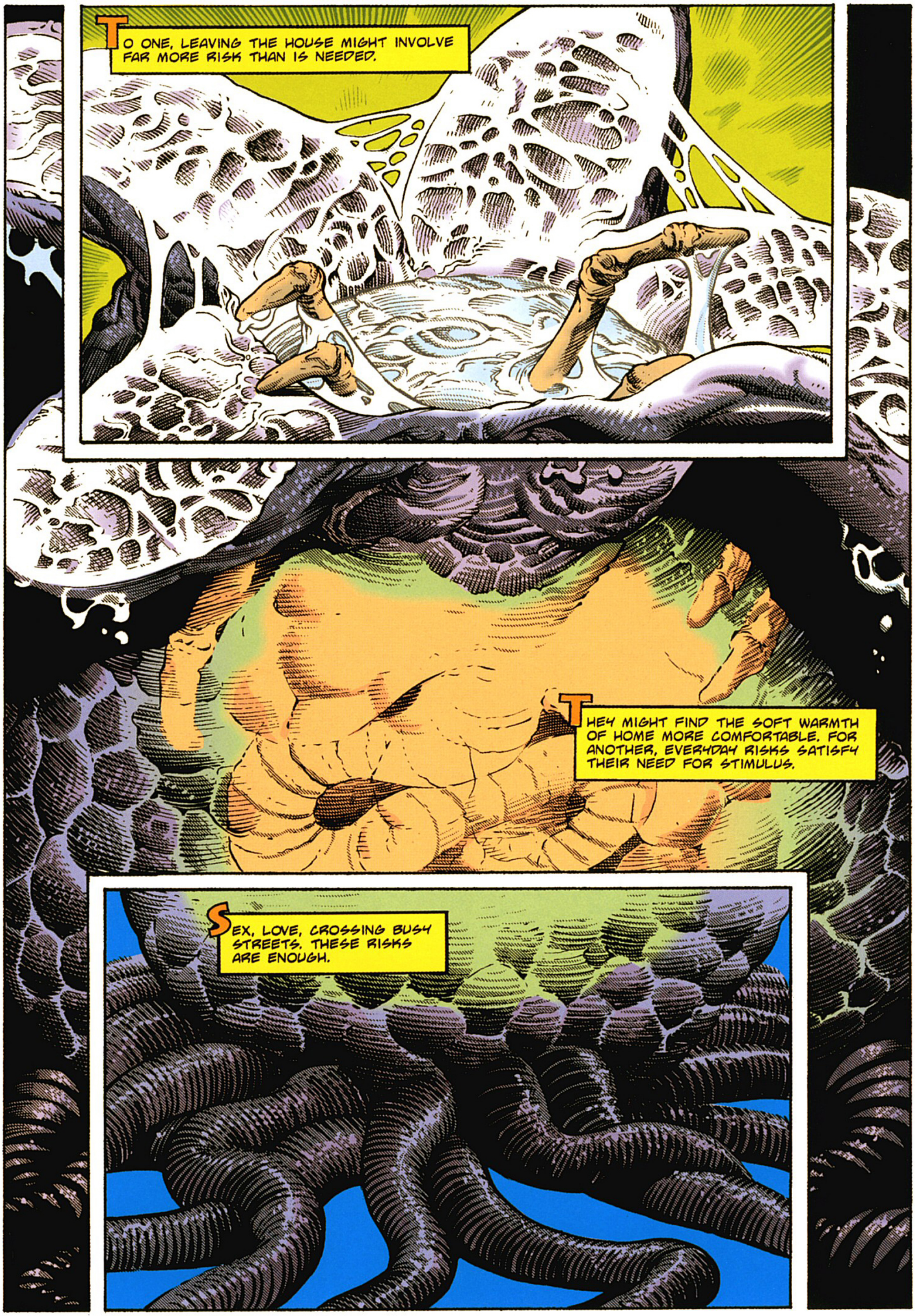
inks
ANDY MUSHYNSKY

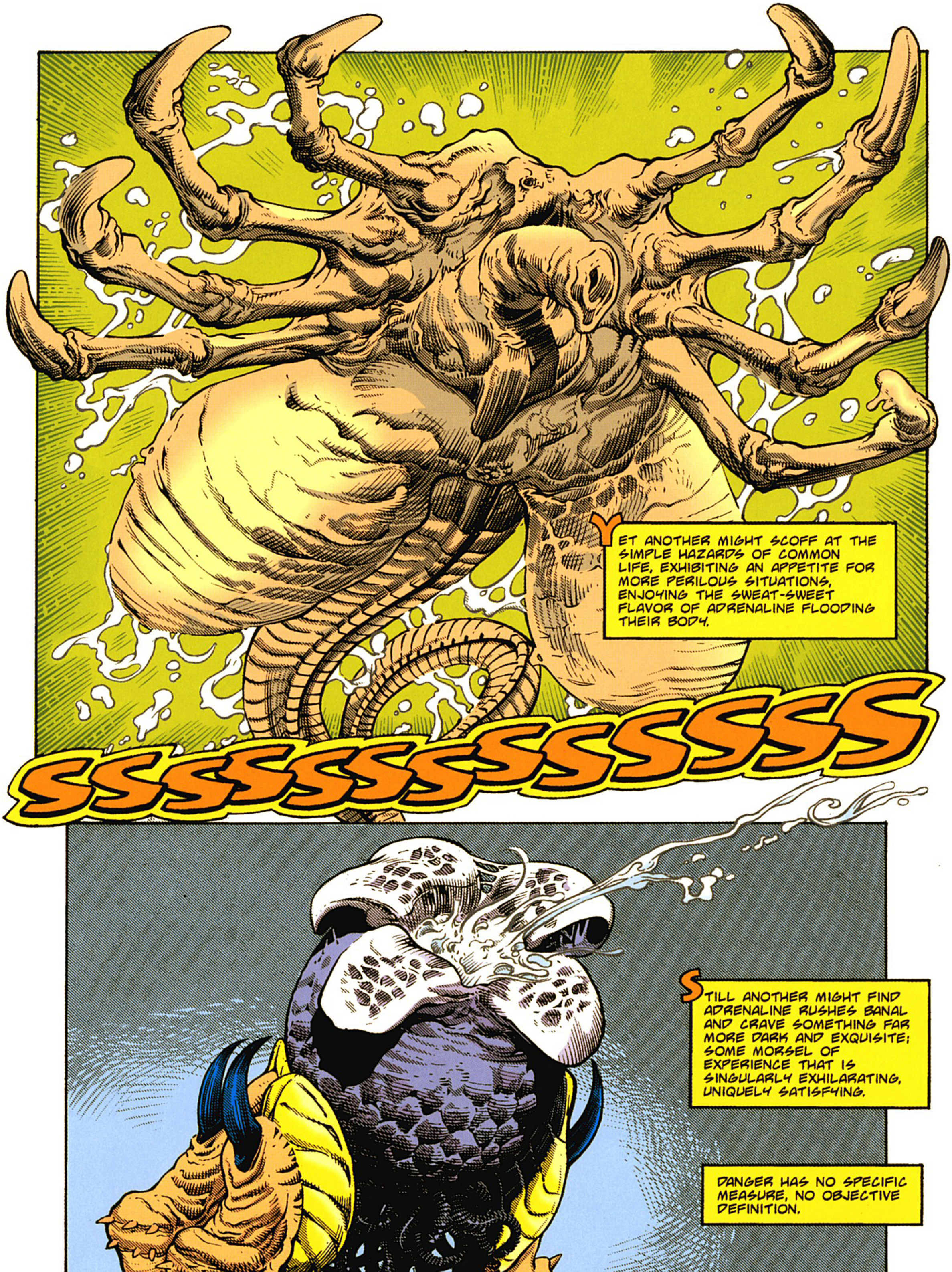
colors
CARY PORTER

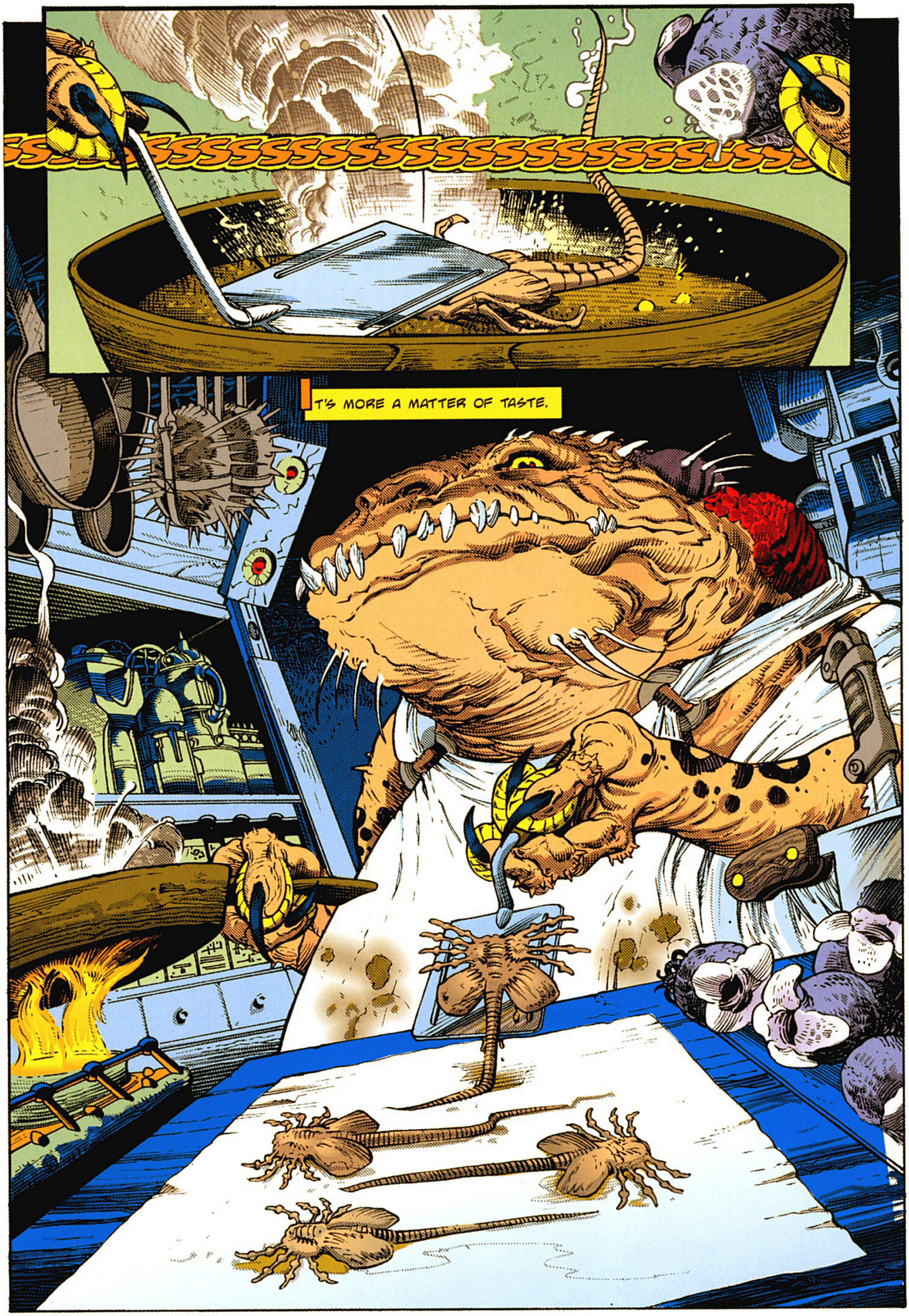
lettering
STEVE DUTRO

title illustration
KILIAN PLUNKETT


ALIENS™
TASTE
DANGER IS SUCH A NECESSARY COMPONENT OF LIFE. WITHOUT SOME FORM OF DANGER, HAZARD, OR STRESS, A CREATURE WOULD PERISH OF ENNUI.
IT'S HAPPENED.
CURIOUSLY, SUCH A VITAL ELEMENT ALSO HAPPENS TO BE ONE OF THE MOST UNQUANTIFIABLE.
HOW MUCH DANGER IS TOO MUCH? ASK THAT QUESTION OF A THOUSAND DIFFERENT PEOPLE AND A THOUSAND INDIVIDUAL ANSWERS EMERGE.


TO ONE, LEAVING THE HOUSE MIGHT INVOLVE FAR MORE RISK THAN IS NEEDED.
THEY MIGHT FIND THE SOFT WARMTH OF HOME MORE COMFORTABLE. FOR ANOTHER, EVERYDAY RISKS SATISFY THEIR NEED FOR STIMULUS.
SEX, LOVE, CROSSING BUSY STREETS. THESE RISKS ARE ENOUGH.


YET ANOTHER MIGHT SCOFF AT THE SIMPLE HAZARDS OF COMMON LIFE, EXHIBITING AN APPETITE FOR MORE PERILOUS SITUATIONS, ENJOYING THE SWEAT-SWEET FLAVOR OF ADRENALINE FLOODING THEIR BODY.
SSSSSSSSSSSSSS
STILL ANOTHER MIGHT FIND ADRENALINE RUSHES BANAL AND CRAVE SOMETHING FAR MORE DARK AND EXQUISITE; SOME MORSEL OF EXPERIENCE THAT IS SINGULARLY EXHILARATING, UNIQUELY SATISFYING.
DANGER HAS NO SPECIFIC MEASURE, NO OBJECTIVE DEFINITION.


SSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS
IT'S MORE A MATTER OF TASTE.

TASTE

script
EDWARD MARTIN III

art
MARK NELSON

colors
RAY P. MURTAUGH

lettering
WILLIE SCHUBERT

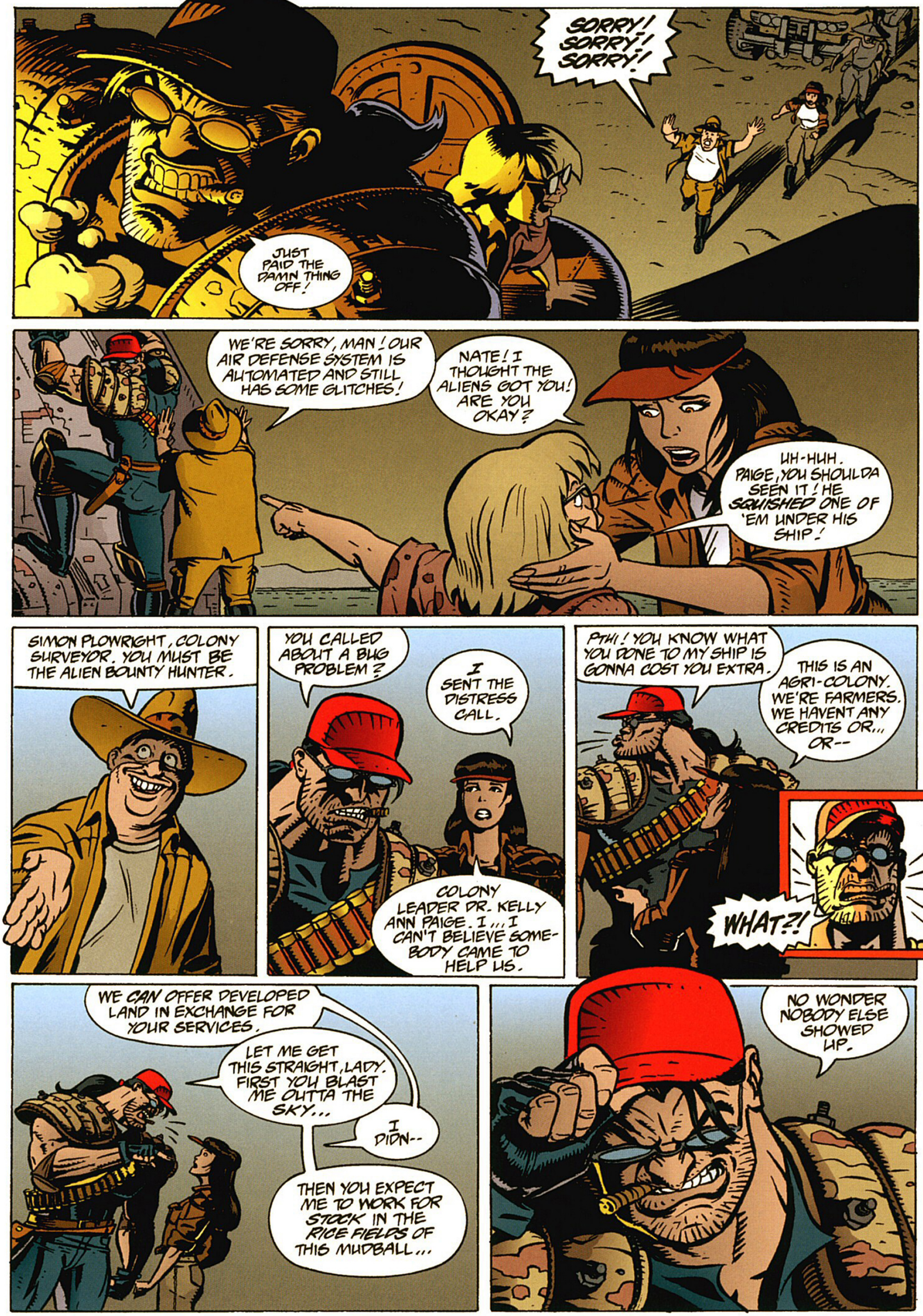
title illustration
JOHN BOLTON

AAAGHH!
nuh...
nuh...
nuh...
HUH ?

HISSSS
MONDO PEST
KRUNCH
SAY GOODNIGHT, GRACIE.
BRAKA

NEVER TURN YOUR BACK ON A BUG, KID.
UH-HUH.
PTUI
PISSSS
IS THAT WHERE YOU LIVE ?
UH-HUH.
UH-HUH. THAT ALL YOU KNOW HOW TO SAY ?
UH-HN...N-N- NO. I WAS LOOKING FOR MY UNCLE HANK WHEN THE UM... BUG CAME. YOU KNOW... THE ONE YOU...UH... CAN YOU HELP ME FIND HIM... MY UNCLE HANK I MEAN ? HUH ? CAN YOU, MISTER ? PLEASE ?
YEAH, SURE, KID.

HAILING COLONY ORYZA. MONDO PEST REQUESTING LANDING INSTRUCTIONS...
FIRE.
WOOSH
KA-BLAM
WHAT THE--?
SKRASH
KSHOOO
STUPID @#$% YAHOOS!


SORRY! SORRY! SORRY!
JUST PAID THE DAMN THING OFF!
WE'RE SORRY, MAN! OUR AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM IS AUTOMATED AND STILL HAS SOME GLITCHES!
NATE! I THOUGHT THE ALIENS GOT YOU! ARE YOU OKAY?
UH-HUH. PAIGE, YOU SHOULDA SEEN IT! HE SQUISHED ONE OF 'EM UNDER HIS SHIP!
SIMON PLOWRIGHT, COLONY SURVEYOR. YOU MUST BE THE ALIEN BOUNTY HUNTER.
YOU CALLED ABOUT A BUG PROBLEM?
I SENT THE DISTRESS CALL.
COLONY LEADER DR. KELLY ANN PAIGE. I... I CAN'T BELIEVE SOMEBODY CAME TO HELP US.
PTHI! YOU KNOW WHAT YOU DONE TO MY SHIP IS GONNA COST YOU EXTRA.
THIS IS AN AGRI-COLONY. WE'RE FARMERS. WE HAVEN'T ANY CREDITS OR... OR--
WHAT?!
WE CAN OFFER DEVELOPED LAND IN EXCHANGE FOR YOUR SERVICES.
LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT, LADY. FIRST YOU BLAST ME OUTTA THE SKY...
I DIDN--
THEN YOU EXPECT ME TO WORK FOR STOCK IN THE RICE FIELDS OF THIS MUDBALL...
NO WONDER NOBODY ELSE SHOWED UP.

SIR, I'LL PERSONALLY REPAIR YOUR SPACECRAFT--
WE NEED HELP. WE DON'T KNOW WHERE THESE THINGS CAME FROM--
I KNOW WHERE!
THE ONE THAT CHASED ME CAME OUTTA THAT CAVE PIT BY OLD MAN RADOMSKI'S PLACE.
WE LOST CONTACT WITH A SECURITY SQUAD NEAR THERE.
WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING!
WAIT, WHERE'S HE GOING?
I GUESS HE AIN'T GONNA HELP US AFTER ALL.
IS THAT THE HERK MONDO?
I HEARD THE GUY BROKE OUT OF MARINE PSYCH LOCK-UP JUST TO HUNT ALIENS.
JEEZ, MAYBE IT'S BETTER HE AIN'T HELPIN US.
I WONDER...
AIN'T GOING ANYWHERE ANYWAY...
...SO I MIGHT AS WELL DO SOME DAMAGE.
DID Y'ALL HEAR THAT? HE'S GONNA HELP US!
YEAH, BUT Y'ALL BETTER FIX MY SHIP.
YES, SIR! I'LL TOW IT INSIDE THE COMPOUND STRAIGHT AWAY!
I GOTTA SEE THIS GUY IN ACTION!
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION!
YOU'RE STAYING WITH SIMON.
AWWW.

I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT, MONDO.
ONLY ONE IN EXISTENCE. SPITS SHELLS SIMUL-TANEOUSLY THROUGH BOTH BARRELS.
GOES THROUGH THE AMMO FAST. BUT YOU'D HATE TO BE ON THE BUSINESS END, LADY.
I WAS TALKING ABOUT YOUR TATTOO. AND YOU CAN CALL ME PAIGE.
SALLY
DON'T ASK ABOUT THE TATTOO...
...LADY.
OKAY, VOLUNTEERS, THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE FUN. IF YOU WANT TO WAIT HERE, I'LL UNDERSTAND.
HEY, WE'VE HAD WEAPONS TRAINING.
YEAH, WE CAN TAKE IT!
ALL RIGHT. YOU DO WHAT I SAY WHEN I SAY. NOW LET'S GO GET 'EM!
ARE THEY... THE ALIENS, I MEAN ... AS VICIOUS AS THEY SAY?
LIKE A TWO-HEADED RABID DOG ON SPEED TABS. NOW GET YOUR FAT BUTT DOWN HERE!
YUH-YES SIR, MR. MONDO!
LADY, YOU GOT BUGS ALRIGHT.

BETTER NOT USE THAT FLAMETHROWER, MR. MONDO. I THINK THIS IS *MAGNESIUM*.
PTUI
NAG NAG NAG.
MAGNESIUM?
YEP. ONCE THIS STUFF STARTS BURNING, THERE AIN'T NO PUTTING IT OUT.
BE WORTH A FORTUNE TO A MINERAL CORPS, THOUGH.
SHH!
UHHH... UHHH...
THIS WAY.
HANK!

HANG IN THERE. WE'LL GET YOU OUT!
UH-UH... DON'T BOTHER. JUST UH... GET IT OVER WITH.
HE'S DEAD ALREADY.
NO...
HE'S RIGHT, PAIGE.
K-K-KILL ME...
NO!

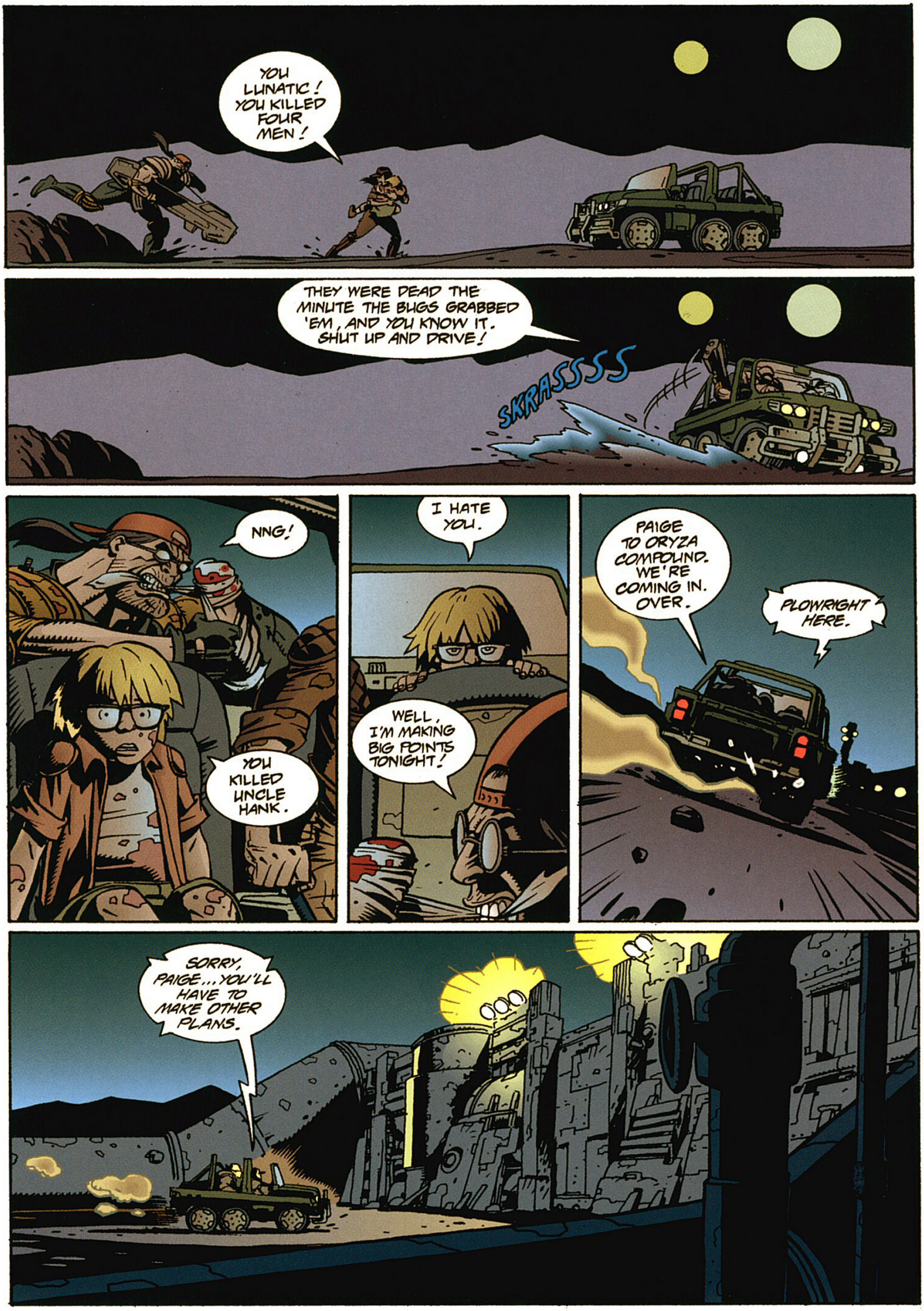
BEHIND YOU!
IT'S ABOUT TIME!
BRAK
KRAK
GAAAHH!
SUNUVABITCH!
BRAK BRAKA BRAK

AH! AH! AH!
BRAKA BRAKA BRAK
BRAKA BRA
WEAPONS TRAINING, MY BUTT!
OH! SO, YOU WANT SOME MORE, HUH?
CLICK!
CRAP!
PTUI

AAARG!
KRAKT
DAMMIT!
SHRAAAK!
FRASH
KA-CHOW
KA-CHOW
KA-CHOW
COME BACK HERE WITH MY HAND!

MONDO!
G'WAN-- GET OUTTA HERE!
GO! GO!
WAIT! UNCLE HANK!
I...UH...
DO IT...

BRAKOW
NOOOO!
HISSSSSSS
BRAKA BRAKA
BRAKA
BRAKA
BRAKA


YOU LUNATIC! YOU KILLED FOUR MEN!
THEY WERE DEAD THE MINUTE THE BUGS GRABBED 'EM, AND YOU KNOW IT. SHUT UP AND DRIVE!
SKRASSSSS
NNG!
YOU KILLED UNCLE HANK.
I HATE YOU.
WELL, I'M MAKING BIG POINTS TONIGHT!
PAIGE TO ORYZA COMPOUND. WE'RE COMING IN. OVER.
PLOWRIGHT HERE.
SORRY, PAIGE... YOU'LL HAVE TO MAKE OTHER PLANS.

I WON'T RISK COMPROMISING COMPOUND SECURITY.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, SIMON? WE'VE GOT INJURED! MOVE THE BARRICADE! NOW!
NO CAN DO. YOU TURN AWAY NOW OR I'LL ACTIVATE THE MISSILE SYSTEM.
DAMN IT! YOU'LL PAY FOR THIS, SIMON!
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND! THE ALIENS ARE...
THONK
WHAT TH--?!
AHH!
HOLY...

...MOTHER...
KRASSH
YAAHH!

HSSSSS
PLOWRIGHT? WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON? PLOWRIGHT?!
MOVE OVER, LADY.
OOF!
WHAT ARE YOU?
THE PARTY'S STARTED WITHOUT US...
AND INVITED OR NOT, I'M SURE AS HELL...
SCREECH
...NOT GONNA...
...MISS IT!
VROOM VROOM VROOOOOOOOOOM
KRASH

KRUNCH
AAIEE!
FISSSSSS
WHAA!
KONK
SORRY I'M LATE.
I GUESS THE FIRST DANCE GOES...
...TO YOU.

FRAK
MONDO!
HUH ?
HISSSSS
SKREEEE
SORRY, BUDDY! SHE'S MY DATE!
HMM. LOOK LIKE THE JEALOUS TYPES.
OKAY GIRLS. THAT'S IT.

...PARTY'S OVER.
FWOOSH
FWOOSH
SCREEEEE
NATE!
HEY, KID...?
CRUNCH
DAMN.

FWOOSH
PTUI
SHINK
PISST
Di Fate LAGER
GLUG GLUG GLUG
WHERE ARE YOU--?
BACK TO THE HIVE TO GET THE KID...
... DEAD OR ALIVE.
YOU... YOU REALLY ARE A HERO.
HERO NOTHIN'!
I'VE GOT A BONE TO PICK WITH THOSE BASTARDS!

WELL, WELL, WELL.
A MAN-MADE EGG FARM... SIXTEEN COUNT... HMM...
ONLY ONE HARD-BOILED BABY LEFT. TOO BAD...
...I LIKE MINE SCRAMBLED!
FWOOSH
SKRIKKT
UH-OH...
HISSS
HISS

UHHH...
LET'S SEE... LANDED ON ONE, SHOT A COUPLE WITH COLONISTS, RAN ONE OVER, BASHED ONE IN THE HEAD, IMPALED ONE, AND BURNED ONE... THAT'S SIX OR SEVEN DOWN OUTTA SIXTEEN, SO THAT LEAVES... DAMN!
RAN OUT OF FINGERS!
SALLY

Hmm... WHAT DID THAT GUY SAY ABOUT THESE WALLS...?
...MAGNESIUM!
WOOSH
BRAKA
BRAK
WHUMP
UNF!

YA THINK I *ENJOY* THIS... DON'T YA?

YA DON'T LIKE ME.
BRAKA BRAKA BRAKA BRAKA
BUT CAN'T YA SEE, IT'S THE SYSTEM?
PLITCH
QUEEN
WE'RE JUST PAWNS IN A GRANDER SCHEME OF THINGS!

WHEN YOU COME RIGHT DOWN TO IT, IT'S ABOUT SURVIVAL.
YOU KILL ME, OR I KILL YOU.
BRAKA
BRAKA
BUT HEY, IT'S A LIVING!
WHOA, SLIME PUPPY!
POOSH
WHOOPS! OUTTA GAS!

BUT NOT OUTTA BULLETS!
BRAKA BRAKA
OH CRAP!
I'M GONNA HAVE TO GET BIGGER CLIPS!
CLICK
POMP
WHOOM

UNCLE HANK?
NOT QUITE.
C'MON.
SSSSSSSCCHH
UGH!
SLASH
YOU!

WHAT'D YA DO WITH MY HAND?
DID YA EAT IT? HUH? DID YA?
I-- LIKED-- THAT-- HAND!
CHOK CHOK CHOK
CHAK
GAK
HUF... HUF... I THINK I'VE MADE MY POINT.

MUH-MISTER MONDO?
C'MON, KID. WE GOTTA GET--
HUH? HEY, KID, IF THIS IS ABOUT YOUR UNCLE...
BRAK
HAAK
YOU SAID NEVER TA TURN YOUR BACK ON A BUG.
SHUT UP, KID.

THE NEXT DAY...
ARE YOU SURE YOU KILLED EVERY ONE OF THEM?
IT'S SAFE TO SAY "Y'ALL" GOT YOUR MONEY'S WORTH, LADY.
'COURSE, I DON'T ADD SO GOOD...
YOU COULD STAY YOU KNOW, WE'LL NEED A HAND COME HARVEST TIME.
SORRY, LADY. I'M NOT A FARMER. AND I'LL BE NEEDING A HAND MYSELF.
SALLY
YOU NEVER TOLD ME WHO SALLY IS!
YEAH? DON'T MENTION IT.
SIMON! YOU'RE ALIVE!
HELP ME...
OOF!
I WAS HOPING YOU SURVIVED, PLOWRIGHT!

GAAAAGGHH!
HERK! WHAT'RE YOU--
SHRAKT
SIMON HERE HAS SOMETHING TO SAY... DON'CHA, SIMON?
UHHH...
C'MON! FIRST TELL THE PART ABOUT YOU BRINGIN' THOSE EGGS HERE.
NO! GAHHH... UH-UH...
THEN YOU SENT YOUR MEN INTO THE HIVE. SUCKERS NEVER HAD A CHANCE!
I DIDN'... AHH... AHHH...
BUT THE THING THAT REALLY GETS ME MAD IS YOU SHOOTIN' MY SHIP!
C'MON, SIMON. SPILL IT.
AGH... OKAY, IT'S TRUE. WANTED THE MAGNESIUM.
HAD TA ... UHHH... GET RID OF THE COLONY BEFORE I COULD... MINE IT. THAT'S ALL... PLEASE STOP.

LOOKEE EVERYBODY, IT'S A GIRL!
PLOTCH
SQUISH
HEY, KID... I'M, UH ...SORRY ABOUT SIMON HERE.
S'OKAY. I DIDN'T LIKE HIM MUCH.
AND ABOUT YOUR UNCLE HANK, UH...
TUNK
OUCH.

THE END

MONDO PEST
Rdel Carmen

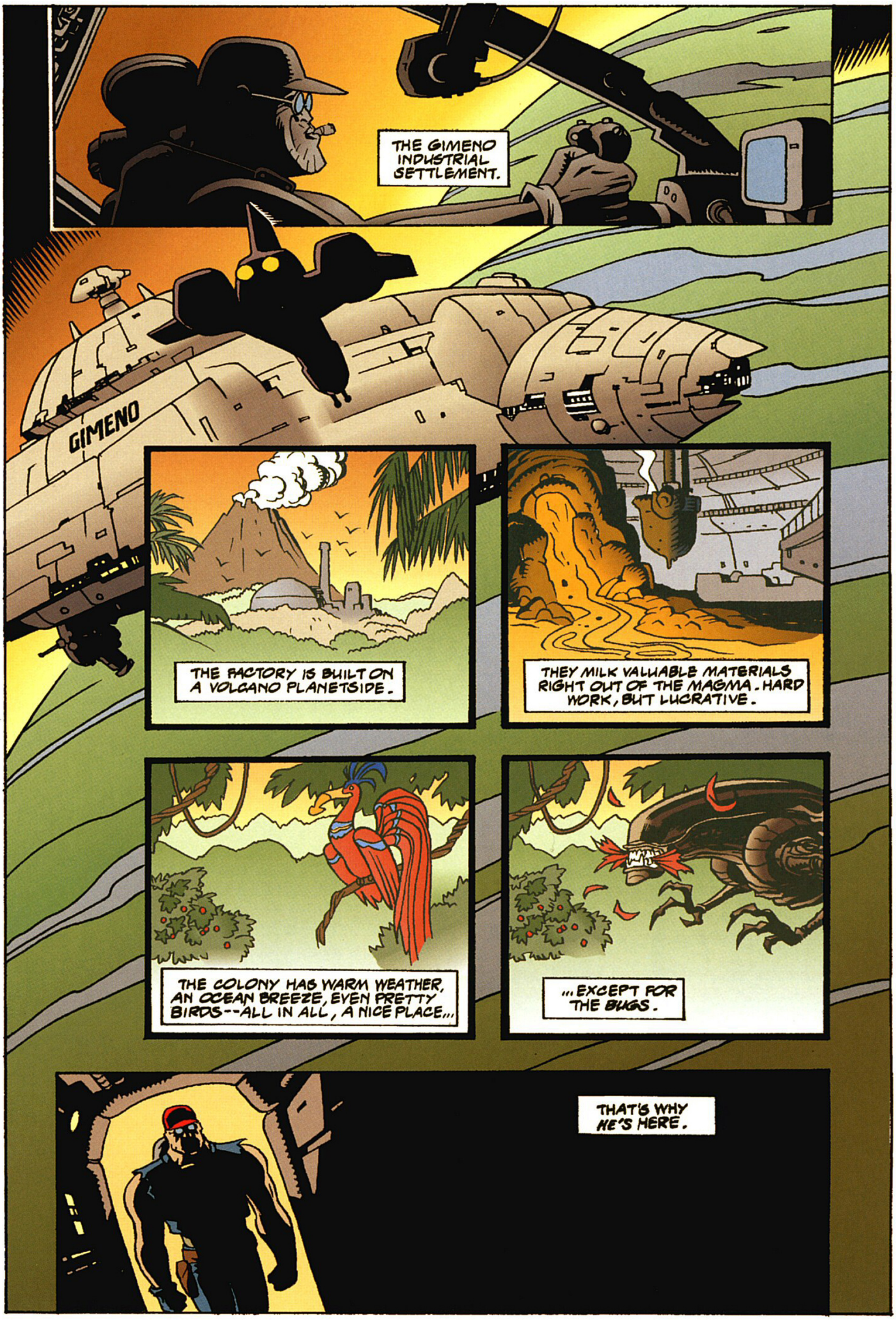
script
HENRY GILROY

art
RONNIE DEL CARMEN

colors
MATTHEW HOLLINGSWORTH

lettering
STEVE DUTRO

title illustration
RONNIE DEL CARMEN with **MATTHEW HOLLINGSWORTH**

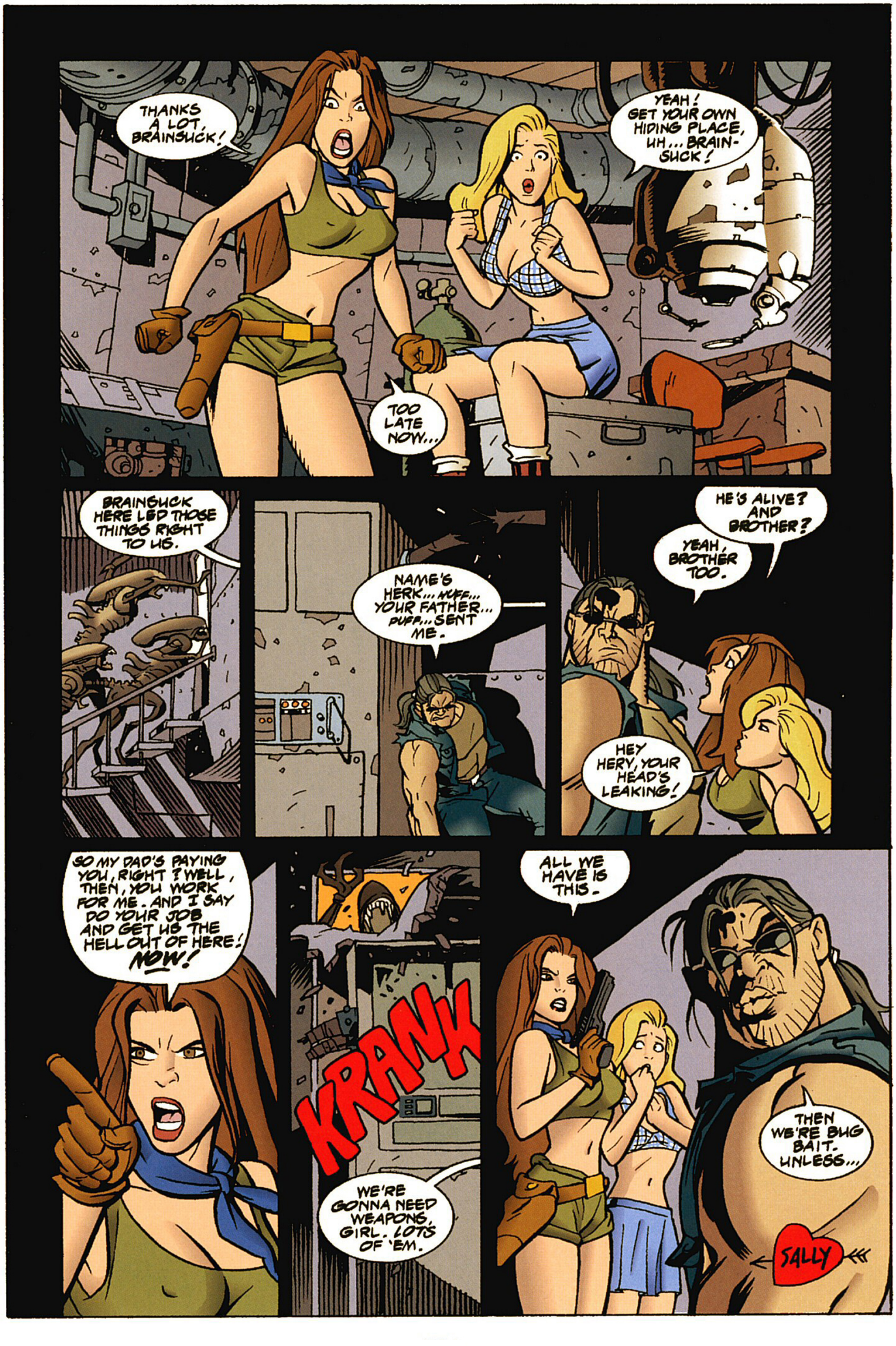

THE GIMENO INDUSTRIAL SETTLEMENT.
GIMENO
THE FACTORY IS BUILT ON A VOLCANO PLANETSIDE.
THEY MILK VALUABLE MATERIALS RIGHT OUT OF THE MAGMA. HARD WORK, BUT LUCRATIVE.
THE COLONY HAS WARM WEATHER, AN OCEAN BREEZE, EVEN PRETTY BIRDS--ALL IN ALL, A NICE PLACE...
...EXCEPT FOR THE BUGS.
THAT'S WHY HE'S HERE.

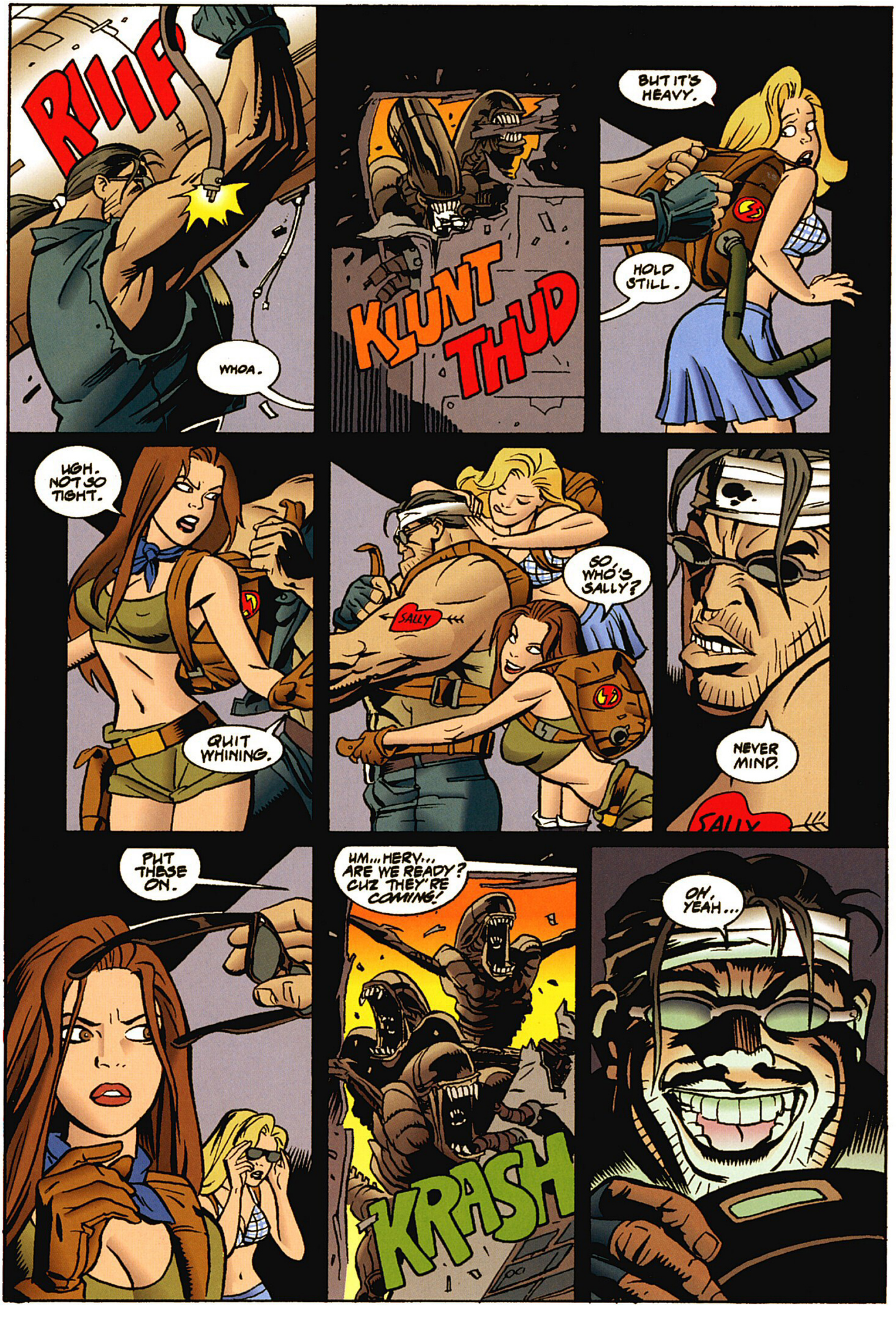
YOU SENT FOR MONDO PEST?
YOU GOTTA FIND THEM.
YOU GOT YOURSELF A FULL-BLOWN THRIVING HIVE, PAL. BIG MESS. LOTTA WORK. WHAT DO YOU WANT?
MY DAUGHTER, KAYLA, AND HER FRIEND, SUZI... ARE GONE.
I CAN PAY... EASY CREDS FOR YOU.
YEAH?
I NEED YOU TO FIND THEM... THEIR BODIES BEFORE THE COLONIAL MARINES ARRIVE AND DIS-INFECT.
MY SON WILL TAKE YOU.
"YOU'RE PAYIN'."

WELCOME TO GIMENO, MONDO.
I REALLY DOUBT WE'LL FIND ANYTHING.
I'VE LOOKED OVER AND OVER.
GET IN CLOSER TO THE TOWER.
THAT LOOKS LIKE A SIGNAL FLARE.
SOMEONE'S ALIVE UP HERE!
HELP
DEAR GOD!

WATCH IT, XAVIER.
OKAY, COME AND GET IT!
BRAKA BRAKA
HEY!
XAVIER TO BASE!
FATHER! THEY GOT TO HIM! FATHER!
RETURN TO BASE, SON! RIGHT NOW!

WHAT THE HELL?
SURPRISE!
BYE-BYE!
PLOTCH!
UH-OH.
HUFF... "FIND MY DAUGHTER..."
...PUFF... "EASY CREDS."
BAM!
HUFF... HUFF...
THAT'S JUST GREAT!

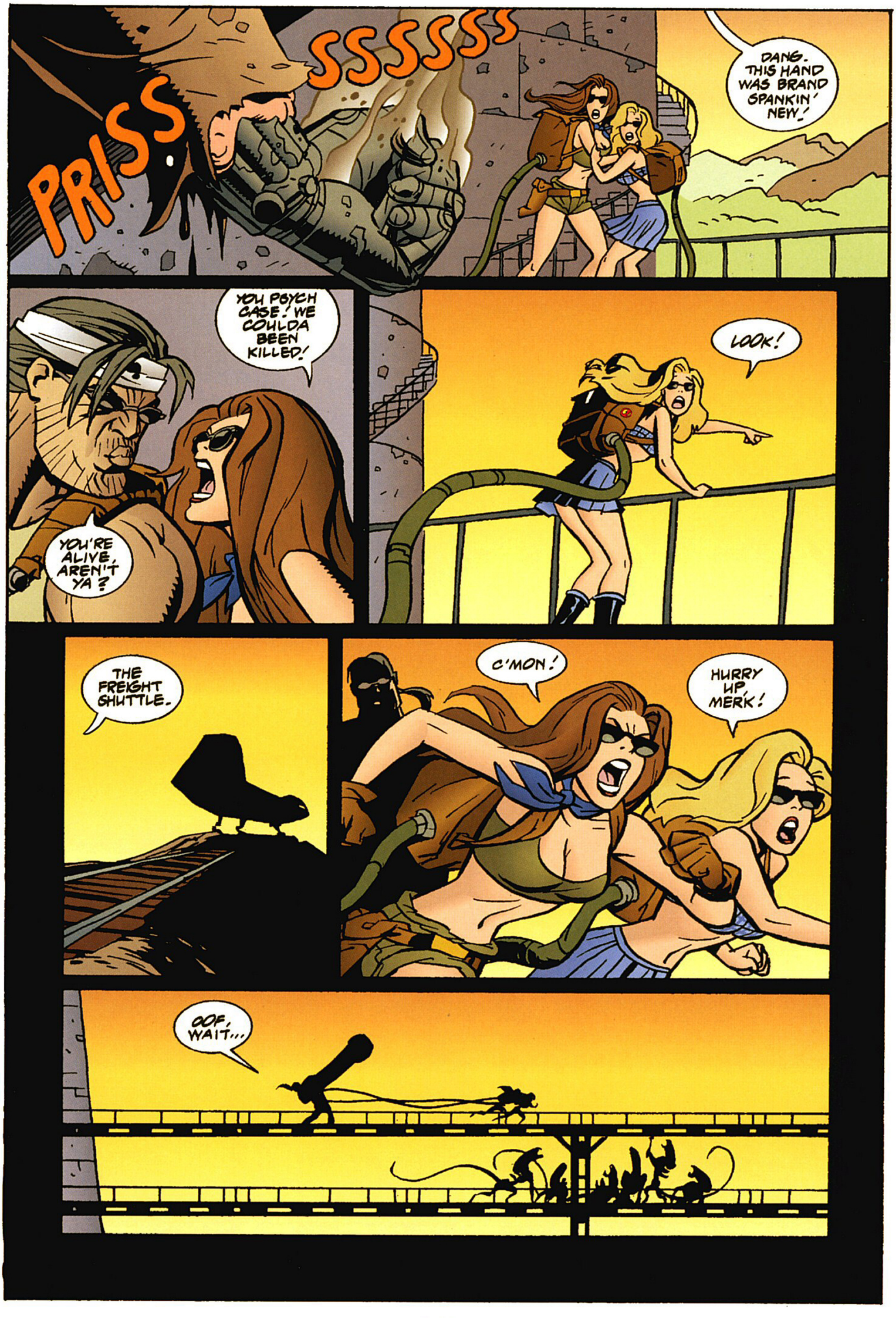

THANKS A LOT, BRAINSUCK!
YEAH! GET YOUR OWN HIDING PLACE, UH... BRAIN-SUCK!
TOO LATE NOW...
BRAINSUCK HERE LED THOSE THINGS RIGHT TO US.
NAME'S HERK... HUFF... YOUR FATHER... PUFF... SENT ME.
HE'S ALIVE? AND BROTHER?
YEAH, BROTHER TOO.
HEY HERY, YOUR HEAD'S LEAKING!
SO MY DAD'S PAYING YOU, RIGHT? WELL, THEN, YOU WORK FOR ME. AND I SAY DO YOUR JOB AND GET US THE HELL OUT OF HERE! NOW!
KRANK
WE'RE GONNA NEED WEAPONS, GIRL. LOTS OF 'EM.
ALL WE HAVE IS THIS.
THEN WE'RE BUG BAIT. UNLESS...
SALLY


RIIIP
WHOA.
KLUNT
THUD
BUT IT'S HEAVY.
HOLD STILL.
UGH. NOT SO TIGHT.
QUIT WHINING.
SALLY
SO, WHO'S SALLY?
NEVER MIND.
SALLY
PUT THESE ON.
UM... HERV... ARE WE READY? CUZ THEY'RE COMING!
KRASH
OH, YEAH...

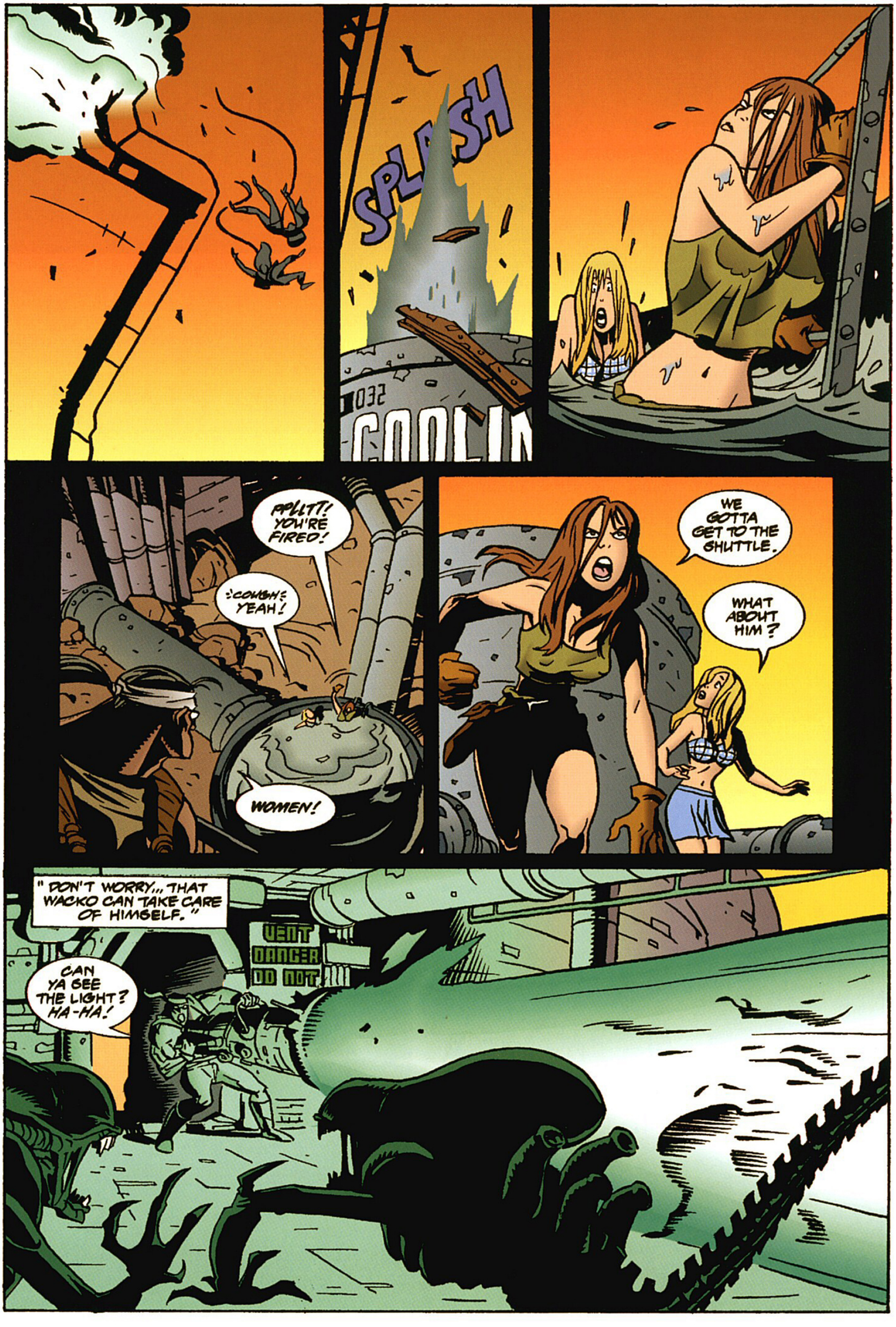
WE'RE READY...

...LET'S MAKE SOME BUG JUICE!
WAHOO!
BRAZZT
JEEZ. THAT THING'S BRIGHT.
I BETTER NOT HAVE EYE DAMAGE!
OOH! UNCLE HERK IS GONNA HAVE SOME FUN NOW!
C'MON, GIRLS! LET'S GET 'EM!
HEY!
OW!

OH HAPPY DAY!
SAY AAAAH!
SHRAK
HEY!
HISSSSSS
KRAK


PRISS SSSSSS
DANG. THIS HAND WAS BRAND SPANKIN' NEW!
YOU PSYCH CASE! WE COULDA BEEN KILLED!
YOU'RE ALIVE, AREN'T YA?
LOOK!
THE FREIGHT SHUTTLE.
C'MON!
HURRY UP, MERK!
OOF, WAIT...

KRAK
KAYLA!
DAMN.
BZZZZZ
EEEEE!
WE'RE GONNA DIE, KAYLA! THERE'RE MORE COMING!
DO SOMETHING, OR YOU WON'T GET PAID!
OH, SHUT UP, WENCH!
BRAZZT


SPLASH
032
COOLIN
PPLLTT! YOU'RE FIRED!
COUGH YEAH!
WOMEN!
WE GOTTA GET TO THE SHUTTLE.
WHAT ABOUT HIM?
"DON'T WORRY... THAT WACKO CAN TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF."
VENT
DANGER
DO NOT
CAN YA SEE THE LIGHT? HA-HA!

NOW HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO GET SOME ATTENTION DOWN HERE?
VENT DANGER DO NOT OBSTRUCT
HELLO!
BRAZZT
THIS OUGHTA DO IT.
RUMBLE
THE MAGMA VENT IS BLOCKED! HOW CAN THAT BE?
I'LL CHECK IT OUT.
CAREFUL, SON.

KA-CHOW
KA-CHOW
KAYLA!
DUCK!
SPLAK
SPLAK
RRRRUMBLE
WHAT IS THAT?
RRUMBLE
MAGMA TREMOR. WE GOTTA LEAVE.
WE HAVETA GET HERY FIRST!
I THINK HIS NAME IS MERK.

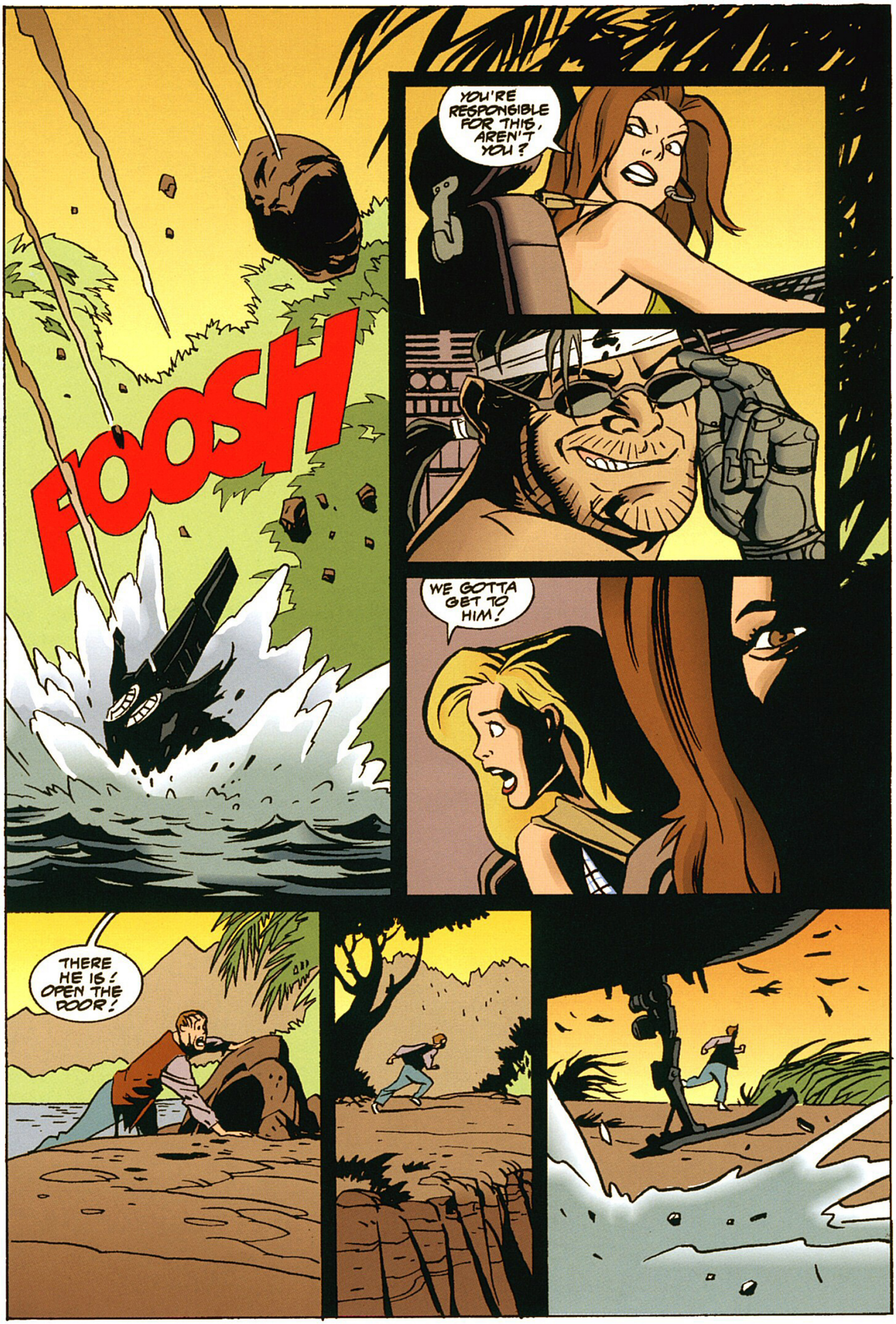
RRUMMBLE
HMM. I'M GETTING A BAD FEELING...
...ABOUT BEING HERE.
HHISSSSSS
MORNIN', SHE-BITCH!
COMPANY CRAP!
YOU WANT SOME UH THIS?
NOT NOW!
SALLY

CKAKT
OOF.
SCREEEEEEE
HOT 'NUFF FOR YA? HA-HA!
OW!
FINALLY!

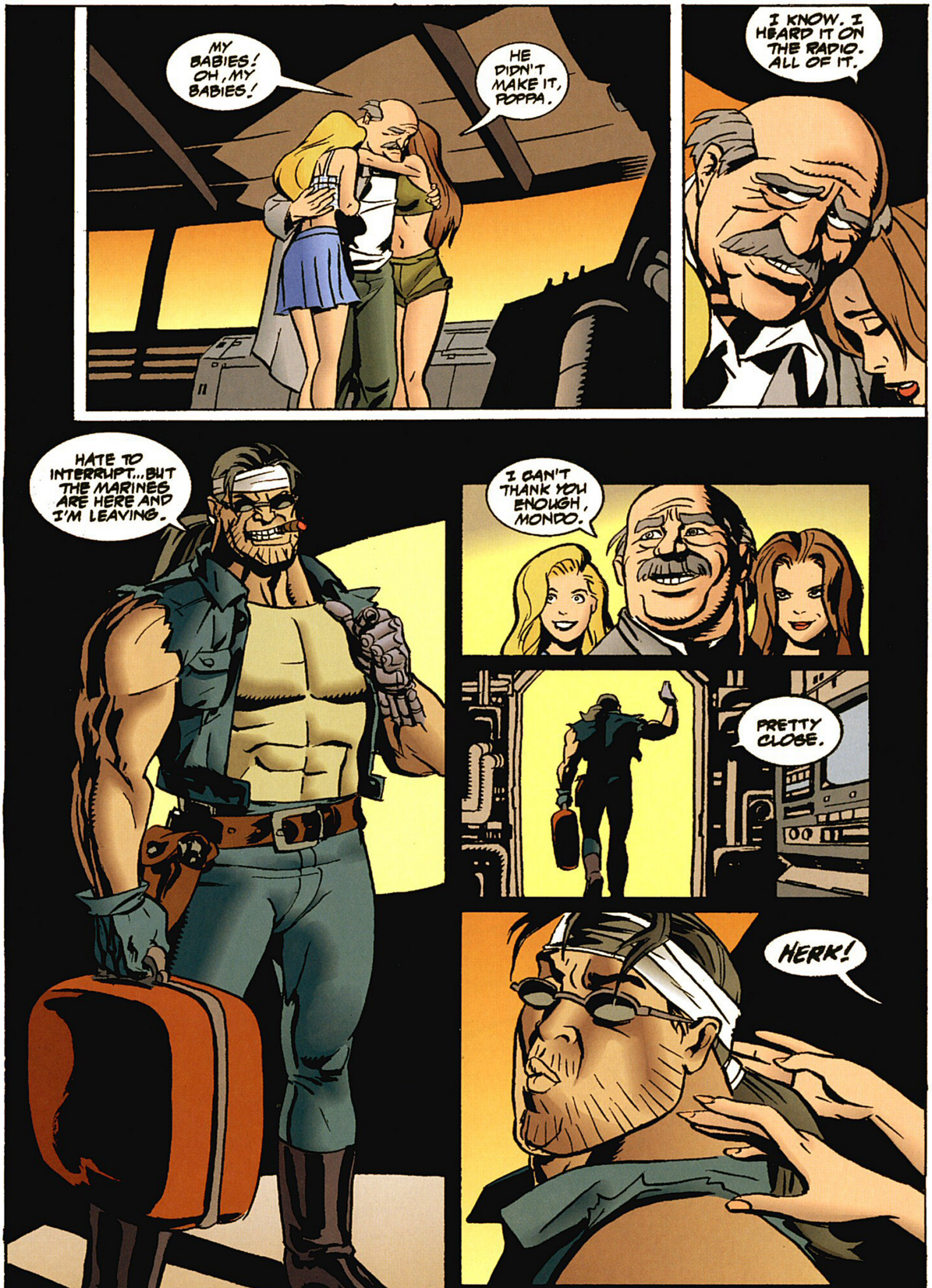
TOOK YOUR TIME, SWEETIES.
HI, HERV!
YOU'RE ALIVE, AREN'T YA?
SHUTTLE CREW. IDENTIFY YOURSELF...
"XAVIER! IT'S ME! KAYLA! WE'RE ALIVE! WE'RE OKAY!"
BRAKATA BRAKA-BRAK

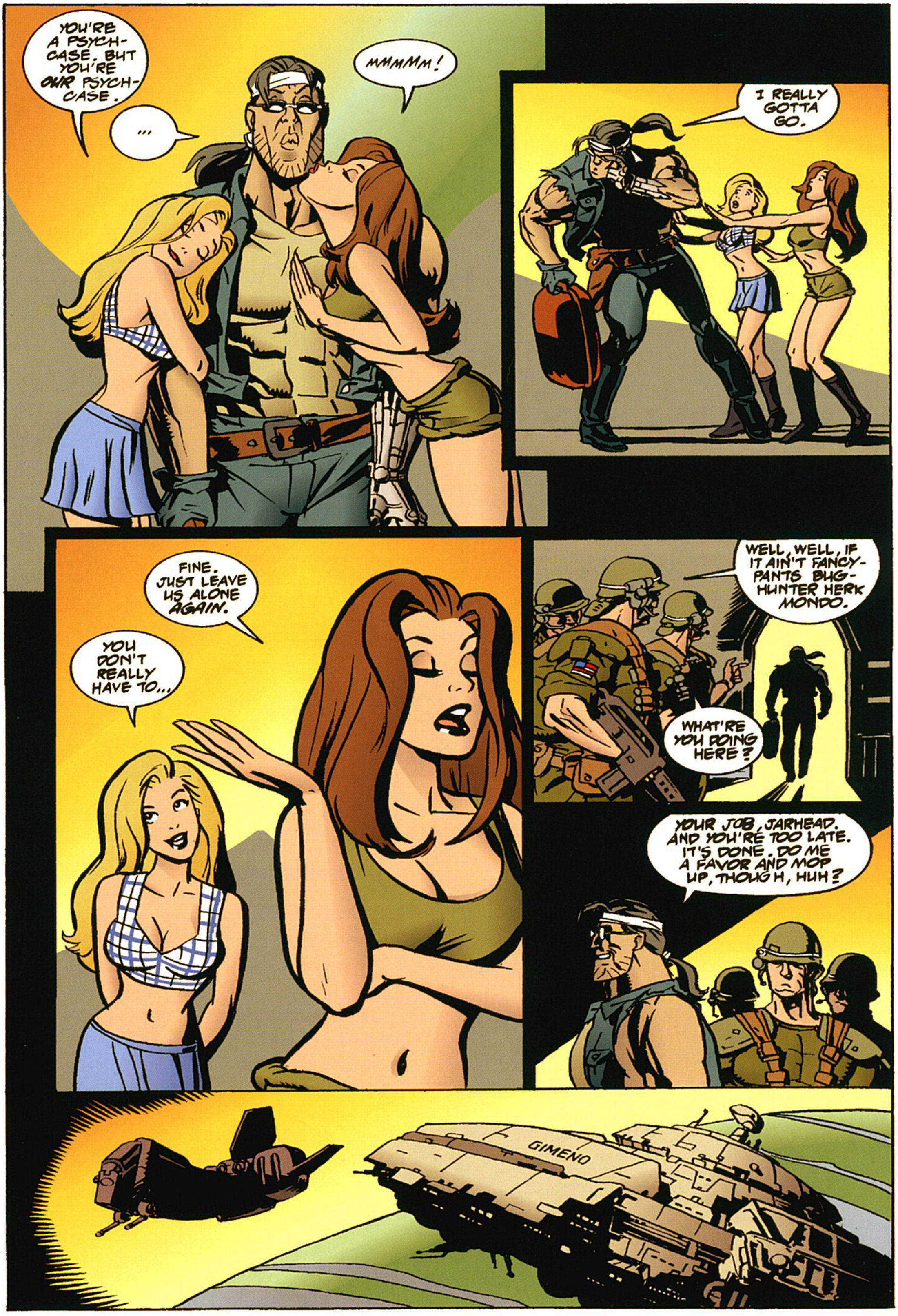
WHAT THE HELL IS THE MATTER WITH YOU?
KAYLA, SWEET LITTLE SISTER...
FZZZT!
...DOES A BROTHER REALLY NEED A REASON TO KILL A SIBLING?
YOU'RE CRAZY!
I GO THROUGH ALL THE TROUBLE TO BRING THE ALIEN HERE...
...AND YOU COULDN'T JUST LET IT KILL YOU, COULD YA? ALWAYS GOTTA BE RIGHT. ALWAYS GOTTA WIN.
NOT THIS TIME, SIS. THIS TIME, I WIN.
DAMN BIRDS! WHAT THE HELL?!
OH, MY GOD. THE BIRDS!

BRAKA-THOOM


FOOSH
YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS, AREN'T YOU?
WE GOTTA GET TO HIM!
THERE HE IS! OPEN THE DOOR!

OPEN THE DAMN DOOR, KAYLA!
KAYLA!
SUZI! SHE'S NOT GONNA OPEN THE DOOR.
YOU WITCH! YOU'RE JUST LIKE YOUR MOTHER!
C'MON, SWEETIE. LET'S END YOUR FATHER'S WORRIES.
AAAAAAAAAAAAA


MY BABIES! OH, MY BABIES!
HE DIDN'T MAKE IT, POPPA.
I KNOW. I HEARD IT ON THE RADIO. ALL OF IT.
HATE TO INTERRUPT... BUT THE MARINES ARE HERE AND I'M LEAVING.
I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH, MONDO.
PRETTY CLOSE.
HERK!


YOU'RE A PSYCH-CASE. BUT YOU'RE OUR PSYCH-CASE.
...
MMMMM!
I REALLY GOTTA GO.
FINE. JUST LEAVE US ALONE AGAIN.
YOU DON'T REALLY HAVE TO...
WELL, WELL, IF IT AIN'T FANCY-PANTS BUG-HUNTER HERK MONDO.
WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE?
YOUR JOB, JARHEAD. AND YOU'RE TOO LATE. IT'S DONE. DO ME A FAVOR AND MOP UP, THOUGH, HUH?
GIMENO

MONDO HEAT

script
HENRY GILROY

art
RONNIE DEL CARMEN

colors
PAMELA RAMBO

lettering
STEVE DUTRO

title illustration
RONNIE DEL CARMEN with **PAMELA RAMBO**

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VOLUME 4

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